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Dungeon Crawl Classics #48

The Adventure Continues

AN ADVENTURE COMPILATION
FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



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Dungeon Crawl Classics #48

The Adventure Continues

A COMPILATION OF ADVENTURES FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



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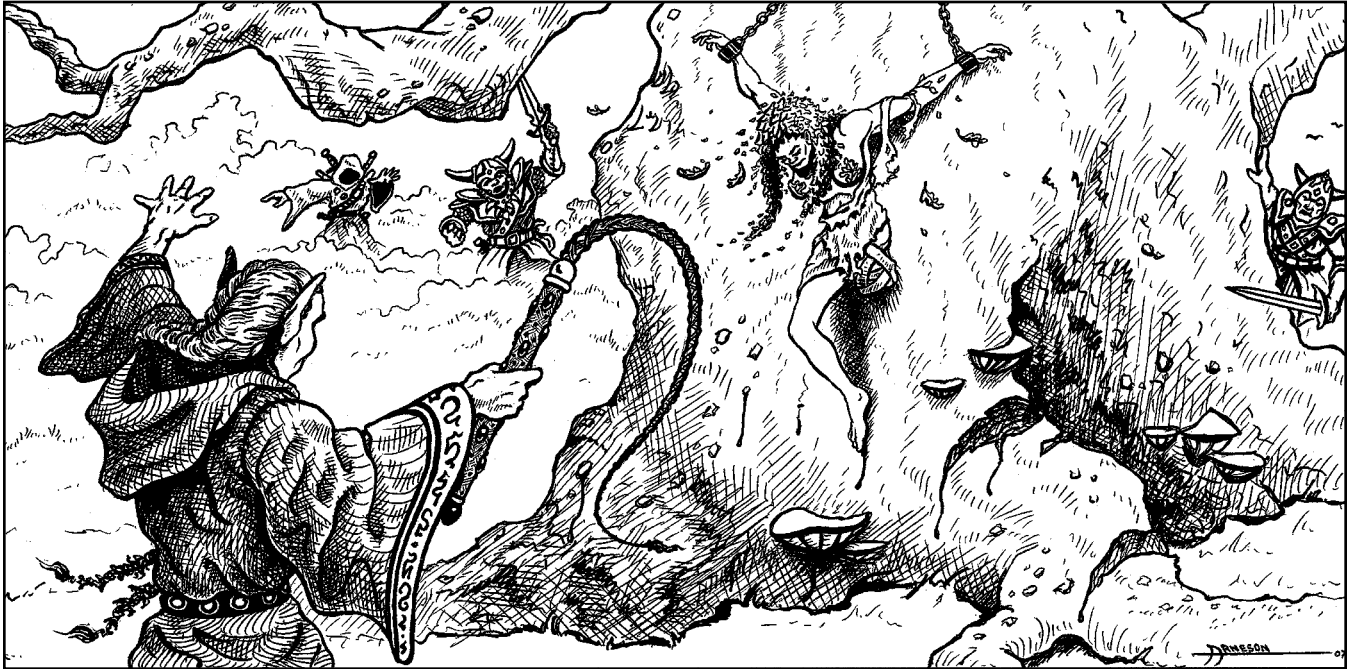
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Dungeon Crawl Classics

Madness at the Mutilated Oak

By Ken Hart

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Madness at the Mutilated Oak is designed for four to six characters of 6th level. While the characters can be of any class, a druid or ranger may be especially useful. Some characters may suffer ability damage in this adventure, so access to a *lesser restoration* spell or potion would be handy. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group's size and unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

Answering a call for help, the heroes arrive in the small town of Cillamar, where they learn that a bard of growing fame (and dubious talent) has disappeared, along with several other men. In addition, an unearthly shriek of agony has been heard coming from the region to the east – an odd landscape of sharp stones, barren paths, and twisted trees. A huge oak tree towers over that area. An evil elven druid is inflicting great damage on the tree and its protective dryad in her desire to possess the "fey treasure" that she believes lies within the oak. She possesses a fey-created staff that has enabled her to manipulate the missing townspeople into serving her.

The PCs must get past her bugbear minions, defeat a satyr ranger and his dire weasel "pets," and avoid the stings of giant wasps to reach the great oak. Once there, they must deal with the powerful druid herself and her *charmed* protectors. The challenge for the heroes is to defeat the druid without killing the four innocent townspeople, who have few qualms about using deadly force against the adventurers.

Should the valiant heroes succeed, they earn the gratitude of the badly injured dryad, who rewards them and gives them information about the region and the secret of the great oak.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|-----|----|------|---|----|
| 1-1 | 7 | T/C | Rolling rock trap <i>Groth Greenstab</i> , bugbear Drd1 2 bugbears Fgt1 | 7 |
| 1-2 | 8 | C | <i>Kalan</i> , satyr Rgr2 4 dire weasels | 7 |
| 1-3 | 9 | C | 3 giant wasps | 6 |
| 1-4 | 10 | C | <i>Lucia Saralonde</i> , Drd7 <i>Phinneas Muddey</i> , Brd4 <i>Kelvin and Ambrose</i> <i>Wickworth</i> , Com1/War1 <i>Arvik Duerlagg</i> , War2 | 8 |

Scaling Information

Madness at the Mutilated Oak is designed for four to six characters of 6th level, but can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 6th level): Remove the class levels from the bugbears in area 1-1 and have the rolling rock trap affect only one square. Remove one of the dire weasels in area 1-2. In area 1-4, reduce Lucia to 6th level.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 6th level): Increase the class levels of the bugbears and Kalan by +1. Add one more giant wasp to the encounter in area 1-3 or increase their hit dice by +2. Increase Lucia's level by +1.

Getting the Players Involved

The following hooks can be used to get the players involved in the adventure:

If there is a druid or ranger in the party, or if any member has established friendly relations with non-evil fey, that character can be haunted by disturbing nightmares, full of violence and pain. The great oak appears promi-

nently. If the party has a fey ally, then have that fey plead for aid in the dream. Upon waking, the PC realizes that something bad is happening near Cillamar. The nature of the threat isn't clear, but the need for help is urgent.

Phinneas Muddey and Arvik Duerlagg are well traveled in the Kingdom of Morrain, so it's possible they encountered one of the adventurers during a previous exploit. That hero could desire to make a quick stop in Cillamar to visit a good friend or settle an old score (depending on the nature of the earlier encounter).

The eerie shrieking is apparently causing many animals and monsters to flee the odd region – and enter the town! The heroes, while traveling nearby, hear that Patriarch Ranz Mentzer of Cillamar is seeking adventurers to deal with the source of the disturbance.

Background Story

Several hundred years ago, a band of evil fey – members of the “Unseelie Court” – entered the Known Realms through a shadowy gateway at the bottom of a well. This portal led to a dark dimension where creatures such as themselves thrived. Once they arrived here, they attacked and manipulated innocents, especially children, driving them to commit tragic acts. Powerful druids banded together to defeat this threat. The angry fey retreated, but they swore they would return and cursed the land around them. The druids' victory was thus tainted, as the natural landscape was transformed by the fey oath into a bizarre mix of forest, dust, and volcanic rock. The druids sealed the well with the creation of a magical oak above it. As long as the oak lives, the gateway to the dark domain cannot be reopened.

Unable to “heal” the landscape, the band of druids grew despondent. Trusting to good-aligned fey to watch over the great oak, they soon retreated from memory. The decades passed, and much of this history was lost, although some tales of the fey's influence in this region remain.

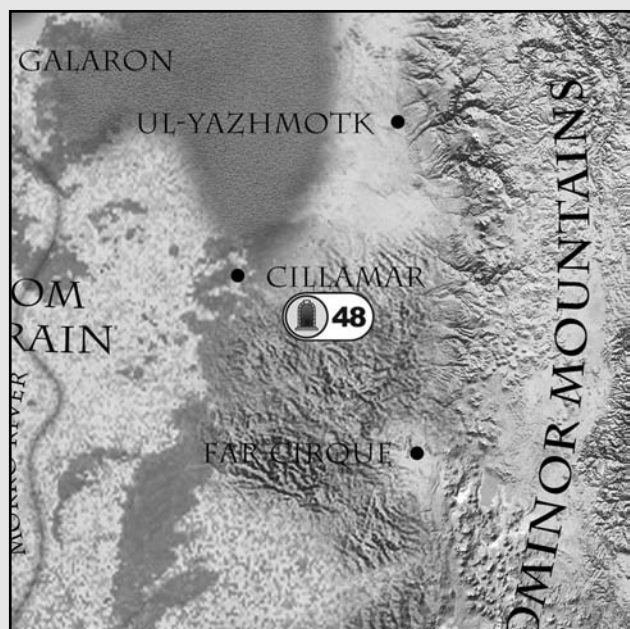
Lucia Saralonde, an evil druid, believes that she is a direct descendant of fey and is obsessed with gathering fey knowledge and power. She recently discovered a magical staff, the *switch of the unseelie*, and she has traced its origins to this region. She believes that a hoard of druidic or fey treasure lies within the great oak. With her allies – a satyr ranger named Kalan and a trio of bugbears she has anointed “the Greenstab Tribe” – Lucia arrived at the great oak, captured Tangle, the dryad assigned as its protector, and has since been torturing the dryad in a futile attempt to uncover the source and nature of the treasure. To further torment Tangle, Lucia has inflicted great damage on the oak itself. In a rage, she cast *blight*, which would have killed the tree if

not for its magical nature. The power of the oak is such that the nearby trees are also feeling its pain, and an inhuman “shriek” of agony is reaching from the forest to the town of Cillamar.

Frustrated by her failure, Lucia entered the town two nights ago, hoping to gain more information about the region’s history. She met and *charmed* herbalist Stefan Barclay, who introduced her to local bard (and part-time sheepherder) Phinneas Muddey. Phinneas, never wasting a chance to impress an attractive woman, regaled her with tales of his adventures. After Lucia described her interest in the great oak, Phinneas said the forest is supposedly haunted or bewitched. Then, tapping into his bardic knowledge, he whispered he’s heard rumors that the tree is a *portal*. This certainly attracted Lucia’s interest. She used the staff to *charm* Phinneas, telling him that she needs his help to convince the oak’s evil guardian to reveal its dark secrets for everyone’s sake. Based on what she learned from Stefan and Phinneas, she also *charmed* the irascible dwarf Arvik Duerlagg and the farmers Kelvin and Ambrose Wickworth – all were good with an axe, so they could serve dual roles as defenders and oak “persuaders” if necessary.

DCC World

Each of the adventures in this book can be used stand-alone, or set in the world of Áereth from DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms. Madness at the Mutilated Oak takes place just east of the wilderness town of Cillamar, in an odd landscape of sharp stones, barren paths, and twisted trees. Here, amid the craggy foothills that climb towards the mighty Ul Dominor mountains, strange beasts lair amongst stranger secrets.



Lucia knows that her actions are born of desperation: Not only is she rapidly using up the staff’s charges, but the disappearances will certainly provoke a response from the town. Yet she must know the truth. Ghostly images of bizarre creatures trying to step through the weakened portal have her pulse racing. She has warned the three bugbears and Kalan to prepare for an attack.

Since then, the shrieking from the forest has redoubled, but Lucia is no further to learning the truth, even with Phinneas pleading with the dryad in her own language. Tangle knows Phinneas and the others are enchanted, so she has remained silent. Just before dawn, while the townspeople still slept, a furious Lucia ordered Kalan to chop off one of Tangle’s legs. She then used *modify memory* on Phinneas, Arvik, and the Wickworths to implant the memory that the “evil dryad” briefly escaped and murdered their friend Stefan (now useless to Lucia) inside the tree before the dryad was brutally recaptured by Kalan.

Adventure Prelude

Phinneas Muddey, Arvik Duerlagg, and herbalist Stefan Barclay were all last seen at the tavern The Infamous Oath the night before last. The two missing farmers, Kelvin and Ambrose Wickworth, disappeared around dawn the following morning. If the PCs attempt to uncover clues about the last actions of the missing people, give them the following information based on their Gather Information or Diplomacy checks:

Gather Information Checks at the Infamous Oath Tavern

Check DC Result

- 10 Phinneas often tries to romance women who enter the tavern, particularly newcomers to Cillamar who might not know that the irresponsible though talented bard spends part of the year as a sheepherder. Arvik is an armorsmith with a bad temper; rumor has it that he settled in Cillamar after failing to join the Morrain military. Stefan is a good friend of the Wickworth family, who run a farm at the southeastern edge of town.
- 15 In the hours before he disappeared, Phinneas spent a lot of time talking to an attractive elven woman who arrived with Stefan. No one recalled having seen her before, but that wasn’t unusual; many travelers pause at The Infamous Oath on their way through the region. For a good portion of the night, the elven woman held the attention of a number of men, which didn’t

sit well with some of the female townsfolk. She carried what looked like a riding crop, or a switch of wood, in one hand. Yet no one can recall her arriving in town by horse.

- 18+ The elven woman introduced herself as Lucia, and she pleasantly listened to all of Phinneas' adventurous tales. Wiser townspeople know that while Phinneas has traveled a bit and knows just about everything that goes on in a 20-mile radius, he wildly exaggerates. He was overheard complimenting Lucia in what he claimed was the Sylvan language, but who knows what he was really saying? Eventually, Lucia left the tavern arm-in-arm with Phinneas and Arvik.

Diplomacy Checks at the Wickworth Farm

Check DC Result

- 10 The distraught parents of the two brothers say Kelvin and Ambrose are good, honest young men, not given to reckless acts. Even when the harvest is over, they continue to work hard around town, making money as woodcutters. They're said to be quite skilled with an axe.
- 15 The parents admit to being worried that Kelvin and Ambrose went to look for the wolves that have attacked their livestock lately, but they doubt their sons would've been so reckless as to do so without telling their parents. If pressed for more information about the "wolves," the elder Wickworths say that they got only a shadowy glimpse of one of the beasts. It slunk away oddly, much lower to the ground than a wolf should be. (This "wolf" is actually one of the dire weasels in area 1-2.)
- 18+ The mother feels guilty. Reluctantly, she says she thought she heard the voice of the sons' friend Stefan Barclay calling to them in the fields just before they disappeared. She thought he said something about "meeting a new friend." But she paid it no mind, and now all three men are missing. She begins to cry.

The elder Wickworths also describe the strange, unearthly screams coming from the region to the east in recent days. Animals from the area have been coming through, clearly panicked by the sounds. The Wickworth farm is fairly close to a rocky path that leads to the weird region. A DC 18 Survival (Track) check uncovers the footprints of the dire weasels, which head toward the rocky path.

A character with Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) can make a DC 25 check to know of the legends regarding the druid-fey conflict. Rumors say that remnants from the battle, perhaps even treasure, may remain, but if so, no one has claimed such items and lived to tell about it. The town's tavern, The Infamous Oath, may even be a reference to the evil fey's vow to return.

If there is a bard in the party, he can make a DC 25 bardic knowledge check to possess the same knowledge as Phinneas; that is, the great oak is a portal to a dark realm from which the unseelie fey came (This information isn't quite accurate; the oak actually *conceals* the true portal.) .

Player Beginning

The steep, rocky path lies ahead of you, and you realize you'll have to scabble up using your hands and feet. Before you can get started, however, you're frozen by a horrific sound from the woods – an unearthly shriek of pain that scrapes across your bones. It ends just as suddenly, with a sharp, cracking sound like dry wood being snapped in two. Then it's quickly replaced by an all-too-human scream.

A moment later, something starts tumbling down toward you from the top of the thirty-foot-high hill. You react swiftly, expecting an attack, but the object awkwardly comes to rest at your feet. It's the body of a young man. Blood from a ragged wound on his shoulder has soaked through his shirt, and a fresh bite wound on his side is clearly visible through ripped clothing.

If the heroes have spoken with anyone in town, they recognize from the description that the just-slain man is Stefan Barclay. The enchanted herbalist had resisted Lucia's pleas to help her develop subtle torments for the oak and the dryad. Before the original *charm person* effect from the *switch of the unseelie* wore off, Stefan was led away from his friends and bound and gagged in area 1-2, apparently to be a future meal for Kalan's dire weasels. Minutes ago, Stefan escaped his bonds, yet his freedom was short-lived. First, one of the dire weasels caught up to him and viciously bit his shoulder. Then Lucia, who had been instructing her bugbear pupil, Groth, in area 1-1, decided to have some "fun." As the injured Stefan ran past, she wild shaped into her favorite form – a hyena – and pursued him, delivering a fatal bite just as he reached the ridge.

Any PC who looks up and makes a Spot DC 15 check sees a hyena staring down at the group from the top of the hill. Before anyone can react, the hyena flees, instantly disappearing from sight (Lucia will assume her normal form and alert her allies of the coming threat.).

Ascending the hill is easy (Climb DC 2), although normal movement penalties apply.

The Twisted Land

As a result of the curse invoked by the fey, the region is an odd mix of geographic features. Just to the east of rich farmland is the rocky ridge over which the adventurers are about to climb. Beyond it are volcanic rock and long ravines, interspersed with green glades and verdant forests.

The Ravine: The ravine on the other side of the ridge, roughly 25 feet wide, winds through the region for hundreds of yards. Along the way, it passes through dusty, barren paths and lush forested areas alike. The sides of the ravine rise up to jagged, rocky edges, 30 feet high in places.

Although it's possible to climb out of the ravine and traverse the jagged surface to reach the oak (area 1-4), the journey across would be extremely time consuming and painful. For game purposes, consider the surface to be under the effect of a permanent *spike growth* spell, except that the sharp protrusions can be seen by anyone with a DC 15 Search check. A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Knowledge (geography) check realizes that it would be nearly impossible for such a landscape to have occurred naturally.

Dangers of Flying: A PC with the ability to fly (whether by spell, item, or a druid's wild shape ability) may decide to scout the area ahead. After 1 round of flight, there is a 25% chance per subsequent round that the character is attacked by 1d3 giant wasps from their nest in the great oak. In addition, Kalan, the satyr ranger in area 1-2, opens fire on any flying humanoid that he sees. He knows that most animals have fled the region, so he is suspicious of any flying creature aside from the giant wasps.

Should an airborne spy reach the oak, the tree's height and thick branches will block any attempt to see what's happening in area 1-4 unless the spy gets close to ground level. If Lucia spots a flying person or animal, she is more than capable of summoning an air elemental or other creature to attack. She has left the giant wasps alone, since they serve as another level of protection against intruders.

Wandering Monsters

If the adventurers linger in the ravine between areas 1-2 and 1-3, there is a 25% chance (1 on a d4) per half-hour that they will be attacked by 1d3 giant wasps from the great oak. If they continue moving, they will not be attacked until they enter area 1-3.

Giant Wasps (1-3): CR 3; Large vermin; HD 5d8+10; hp 32 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); Space/Reach

10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Spot +9, Survival +1. Giant wasps have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fort DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – A Rocky Start (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Reaching the top of the ridge, you see that a rocky, dust-covered path, about 25 feet across, continues through a shallow ravine. Jagged walls rise up about 30 feet on either side. Rocks ranging in size from fist-sized stones to man-sized boulders lie haphazardly along the path. In the dust, you can see footprints pointing in your direction – presumably from the man who just died. Each step is matched by drops of blood. Paw prints approach your position and then head back along the rock-strewn path. From this vantage point, you can clearly see the branches of a magnificent oak tree rising out of the inhospitable, jagged surface about a half-mile away.

The paw prints are from Lucia in hyena form. Despite her druidic trackless step ability, she is making the tracks easy to see (Survival DC 10) in hopes of luring the adventurers into the bugbears' ambush. Lucia would much rather face the town's apparent champions after they endure her gauntlet of minions, and if her allies and the heroes weaken each other in the process, so much the better for her. She doesn't feel like sharing the great oak's secrets.

Halfway across the area, the three bugbears have concealed a tripwire for a trap that will pull down boulders from the sides. Lucia briefly resumes her elven form and tells her minions to get ready. She then wild shapes back into a hyena in order to lead the weakened survivors to the encounters at the grove (area 1-2) and the oak (area 1-4).

Development: The bugbears take 20 on their Hide checks as they conceal themselves behind several of the larger boulders about 15 feet northeast of the trap. Groth Greenstab casts *shillelagh* on his club (newly chopped from the oak). If he has time before the heroes approach, he casts *resistance* upon himself and his tribesmen. As soon as the adventurers trigger the rolling rock trap, the bugbears emerge from concealment and attack. Each one wears leather armor that has been dyed green, and

sports a crude tattoo of a green scimitar on his right cheek. Groth's armor is adorned with crude tribal fetishes made from feathers, bone, and twine.

Tactics: If a PC is injured by the trap, the bugbears throw their spears at him in an attempt to finish him off. They then engage in melee, using the presence of the larger rocks where possible to avoid being flanked. Groth saves his *faerie fire* spell just in case any of the adventurers uses *invisibility* or other type of concealment. They are intensely loyal to Lucia and fight to the death.

If the heroes take any of the bugbears alive and interrogate him, he says that the bugbears follow the orders of Lucia. They don't like the "stupid goat-man" but they obey him because Lucia says they have to...for now.

Rolling Rock Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +10 melee (2d6, rock); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22. Market Price: 1,400 gp.

Groth Greenstab, male bugbear Drd1: CR 3; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk club +4 melee (1d6+2) or spear +3 ranged (1d8+2/x3); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., scent, nature sense, wild empathy; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Hide +6, Knowledge (nature) +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Spellcraft +3, Spot +4, Survival +4; Alertness, Power Attack.

Spells Prepared (3/2; DC 12 + spell level): 0-level – *resistance* (x3); 1st-level – *faerie fire*, *shillelagh*.

Possessions: Leather armor, spear, club, tribal fetishes (5 gp), 25 gp.

Bugbears Ftr1 (2): CR 3; Medium humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d8+1d10+8; hp 27; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk morningstar +6 melee (1d8+2) or spear +4 ranged (1d8+2/x3); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4; Alertness, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Possessions: Leather armor, light wooden shield, morningstar, spear, trapmaker's tools, 25 gp.

Area 1-2 – The Bloodied Grove (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You follow the paw prints as the path turns to your left. Here, the rough earth becomes a little less inhospitable. The area is still littered with stones, but grass and a number of trees have clearly found sustenance. You enter a lush grove, perhaps 50 feet long, with thickly gathered ash and oak trees as high as 30 feet – mere saplings compared to the great oak that you know lies ahead. The trees look odd, however, as though their limbs have been contorted in unnatural ways. Suddenly, you hear the eerie, rasping shriek again ... but now you know its source. It's coming from the trees themselves! As you watch, the very trunks of the trees twist and expand. You hear the bark crack and you see yellow sap gush like blood from a wound.

A DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check confirms that this damage is not natural. Nothing is attacking these plants directly; it's as though the trees are reacting to something that is damaging Nature itself.

With a successful Listen check (DC 10), the heroes realize that there are no birds in the area, despite the presence of trees. However, they do hear the sounds of animalistic grunting and gnawing.

Read or paraphrase the following:

When you look in the direction of the animal sounds, you see the hyena peering out from behind a sharp corner of the ravine. It seems to be laughing at you! It then runs off, disappearing around the corner.

When the PCs reach the corner, they'll see three dire weasels fighting over a long piece of wood. But there's something strange about the wood. A DC 20 Spot check from this distance shows that it's in the shape of a leg – and blood is dripping from the severed, ragged edge.

Development: The dire weasels' bloody "toy" is indeed Tangle's leg. Kalan is hiding in one of the trees at the western edge of the area, about 20 feet up. The tree limbs provide him with cover, and he fires a readied arrow at the first person who either charges or prepares to make a ranged attack at his pets. He shouts the "Attack" command to the three dire weasels as a free action at this time. Lucia has already run off toward area 1-4.

Tactics: Kalan initially concentrates his arrow fire on any dwarves in the party (his favored enemy) or the most obvious physical threat. The dire weasels

are trained to attach themselves to a foe's back or shoulders, using their blood drain attack to reduce the victim's Constitution in subsequent rounds.

The heroes can attempt to reach Kalan by climbing the tree (Climb DC 15, with a -2 penalty because of the oozing sap). However, the first PC who reaches the base of the tree will be attacked by the hiding *fourth* dire weasel, which Kalan had posted as a guard. Have that PC make an opposed Spot check versus the dire weasel's Hide check; failure means the dire weasel gets a surprise attack. Kalan then directs his arrows at the climbing PC, taking advantage of the character's flat-footed status. If a PC gets up on the tree limb, Kalan drops his shortbow and attacks with his longsword.

If Kalan is reduced to less than 10 hit points, he commands any remaining dire weasels to stop fighting, drops his longsword and shortbow (but not his quiver), and parlays for his life, saying that he can help them kill Lucia. If they accept, he tells the adventurers everything he knows about Lucia, the legends of a druidic secret, the capturing of the dryad, and the *charmed* townspeople. If asked about the severed leg on which the creatures were gnawing, he casts blame on one of the "filthy bugbears," although he is responsible for the vile crime.

If the heroes promise to let him and any remaining dire weasels leave the area alive, he shows them a weapon he was planning to use against Lucia once she found the treasure: two arrows with arcane runes upon them. They're *+1 elf bane arrows*. He had hidden them carefully to avoid detection by Lucia. Without Kalan's help, only a search of the surrounding area (Search DC 25) or a *detect magic* spell reveals their existence.

Should the adventurers fail to notice that Kalan is still wearing his quiver, the satyr departs with his remaining *+1 arrows* and any surviving dire weasels and counts himself lucky. He could return as a potential enemy or even an untrustworthy ally in a future adventure.

Kalan, male satyr Rgr2: CR 4; Medium fey; HD 5d6+2d8+7; hp 33; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8/19-20) or head butt -1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +7 ranged (1d6+1/x3); Full Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8/19-20) or head butt -1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +5/+5 ranged (1d6+1/x3); SQ Damage reduction 5/cold iron, low-light vision, favored enemy (dwarves), wild empathy, combat style (archery); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Handle Animal +12,



Hide +16, Jump +4, Knowledge (nature) +9, Listen +9, Move Silently +14, Perform (wind instruments) +6, Ride +6, Search +3, Spot +13, Survival +5, Tumble +6; Alertness, Animal Affinity, Dodge, Rapid Shot, Track.

Possessions: Shortbow, quiver with *+1 arrows* (20), two *+1 elf bane arrows*, longsword, leather armor, *potion of spider climb*, 40 gp.

Dire Weasels (4): CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8; hp 11; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk bite +6 melee (1d6+3); SA Attach, blood drain; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Spot +5; Alertness, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Attach (Ex): A dire weasel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire weasel loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. An attached dire weasel can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached dire weasel through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the creature.

SA – Blood Drain (Ex): A dire weasel drains blood for 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Area 1-3 – Death From Above (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The hyena tracks continue into the bizarre ravine. You walk warily for another hundred yards, each step bringing you closer to the great oak. You can see its massive branches

reaching far into the sky. As your gaze lingers, dark clouds rapidly form above the tree. Low rumbles of thunder echo along the rocky passage. Mixing in with the thunder is another sound...a buzzing? Suddenly, three large shapes fly out from the highest branches and swiftly descend. Insects, each the size of a man, speed toward you, their wings beating so fast as to be nearly invisible. Long stingers protrude from their sleek black abdomens.

By this point, Lucia has reached the great oak, resumed normal form, and cast *call lightning*, which lasts for 7 minutes. The three giant wasps are not under her control, however. They have a nest in the great oak, but the recent activity has driven away all of their standard prey. Desperate for fresh food, they quickly advance on the exposed heroes. The adventurers have 1 round to attack with ranged weapons before the giant wasps enter melee combat.

Tactics: If any PC falls or his Dexterity is reduced to 5 or less by poison, the wasps attempt to grapple that character and fly back to their nest to feed.

Giant Wasps (3): CR 3; Large vermin; HD 5d8+10; hp 32 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Spot +9, Survival +1. Giant wasps have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

SA – *Poison (Ex)*: Injury, Fort DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex.

Area 1-4 – The Mutilated Oak (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The ravine continues to the east, but the tracks lead to a side path slightly to the south. It follows an incline directly up to the base of the great oak. The top of this incline, however, is shrouded in mist. The immense tree's branches spread out beneath the darkening, swirling clouds. Once more, the bark of the trees around you begins to twist and expand. The insane cracking sound is louder than it has ever been.

Lucia has cast *fog cloud* because she wants to be able to control what the heroes see when they get here (She believes that Phinneas' words can make them question their goal; she hasn't considered the possibility of Kalan's betrayal.). She also has cast *barkskin* on herself. Lastly, she has used one of the remaining charges in the *switch of the unseelie* to cast *misdirection*, "cloaking" herself in the chaotic

good alignment of the dryad. (Because she has used the staff so often recently, particularly to maintain the *charm person* effect on the townspeople, there are now only 10 charges remaining.)

When the player characters exit the fog, read or paraphrase the following:

As you step through the mists, the great oak stands before you. It is an awesome creation of magic and nature, 20 feet wide and over 120 feet high. From this vantage, the top of the tree is blocked from sight by the thick, winding limbs that twist around and above you. Just in front of the tree, 25 feet from you, stand four men: three humans and a dwarf. Two of the humans look like farmhands, while the third is dressed more colorfully. All three look at you nervously as they grip their weapons. The fourth man, the dwarf, stares darkly and clutches a large, two-handed axe. Together the men form a protective line in front of an elven woman and...a unicorn! The woman stands facing the great oak, her head bowed in apparent prayer. In one hand, she holds a ruby-studded wooden baton with a whip-like extension. The unicorn looks back at you impassively.

The majestic oak itself has been ravaged. Sap flows out of deep gouges, cut by repeated axe blows, and the reddish-brown bark has been seared by intense heat or fire. In your mind, the tree's gnarled limbs seem twisted in a frozen, almost-human pose of agony. Eerie tendrils of the blackest shadow float like smoke from its ruined roots.

But these disturbing images pale in comparison to the figure who is bound to the mutilated oak: A dryad hangs limply from iron shackles that connect her wrists to the tree. Her lithe, dark-skinned body stirs almost imperceptibly. Most horrible of all is that one of her legs has been severed at the thigh. Blood seeps through a crude bandage.

The dryad is bound by cold iron shackles, which prevent her from escaping into the oak. The unicorn is an illusion, created by Phinneas' *silent image* spell to confuse the adventurers. Because of the effects of the staff's *modify memory* spell, it'll be hard for them to convince Phinneas, Kelvin, Ambrose, and Arvik that Tangle isn't evil or that Lucia isn't trying to help save the town (unless the heroes have kept Stefan's corpse with them during the course of the adventure, which is unlikely). The "praying" Lucia is actually concentrating on the final syllables of the spell *summon nature's ally IV*.

Development: Phinneas, the better-dressed of the humans, hastily assures the adventurers that things are not what they seem (He has just taken his *potion of eagle's splendor* to improve his Charisma.). He says the dryad is a foul creature who is attempting to unleash a fey curse upon the town of Cillamar, and he cites the shadows as proof of the evil that has corrupted the great oak – but in reality, this is a sign that the barrier to the Unseelie Court's world is near collapse.

He introduces the elven woman as Lucia, a benevolent druid who is convinced the key to stopping this threat lies within the oak. He repeats Lucia's claim that she is reluctant to destroy such a magnificent tree because of her calling as a druid, but she will soon have no choice. Phinneas tries to convince the adventurers to depart and allow Lucia to conclude her "noble mission" for the sake of the town.

Any Sense Motive check on Phinneas as he speaks reveals that he is speaking the truth (as he believes it), but a DC 15 result indicates a moral conflict, possibly caused by an enchantment. Because of the *charm person* effect, Phinneas views Lucia as a friend, but he (like the others) is clearly disturbed by the violence done to the dryad and the oak by Lucia and her unsavory allies. Tangle is barely conscious and cannot respond to questions.

Tactics: If the heroes show no intention of obeying Phinneas or if they make any attempt to approach the dryad, Lucia immediately utters the last words of her *summon nature's ally IV* spell as a standard action to summon 1d3 thoqqas, which instantly charge from under the earth. Moreover, the weakening of the barrier has altered her summoning magic. These thoqqas are wreathed in shadow from the fey realm, providing concealment as though from a *blur* spell (20% miss chance).

In the next round, she casts *entangle* near any PC

that she believes is a spellcaster. Afterward, she calls down lightning bolts from her *call lightning* spell (Unless the adventurers spent an unusually long time fighting the giant wasps, this spell should still be active.). Should anyone get past her protectors, she uses another charge from the staff to cast *charm person* on that hero.

Once combat begins, Phinneas abandons his unicorn illusion and casts *sound burst* at any adventurer not engaged with the thoqqas. He uses his *scroll of glitterdust* in the next round. Unless he's threatened in melee, he subsequently performs to inspire courage in his allies. He suffers a -2 penalty in combat because he's not sure that he's doing the right thing.

The townspeople fight bravely to protect their "friend" against these strangers who claim to be heroes. The dwarf Arvik aggressively moves forward to attack, but Phinneas and the Wickworth brothers maintain their defensive line.

If Lucia is injured, Phinneas casts *cure light wounds* upon her if she's next to him. If Lucia is reduced to 10 hit points or less, she again wild shapes into a hyena and attempts to withdraw behind the great oak, carrying the *switch of the unseelie* in her jaws and using the width of the tree as cover.

Should Lucia die (regardless of her form), read or paraphrase the following:

Before Lucia's body can fall, a half-dozen tiny winged creatures erupt from the shadows that surround the oak! Carrying gleaming scythes twice as large as they are, the red-eyed, malicious-looking fey slice through Lucia, and their wrinkled claws rip out a ghostly, screaming hyena spirit from the druid's corpse! Before your startled eyes, the six creatures fly south, carrying the shrieking hyena spirit between them.

Switch of the Unseelie

This short staff resembles a wooden riding crop with a long, whip-like extension. Its blood-red leather handle is encrusted with several rubies and pieces of quartz. First created by fey spellcasters, it allows use of the following spells to toy with people's perceptions and allegiances:

Modify memory (3 charges)
Charm person (1 charge)
Misdirection (1 charge)
Ventriloquism (1 charge)

If created by a fey, the staff's spells are subject to modifiers that apply to the spell-like abilities of fey, such as the druid's resist nature's lure ability.

Moderate enchantment; CL 8th; Craft Staff, *charm person*, *misdirection*, *modify memory*, *ventriloquism*; Price 28,000 gp (fully charged); 5,600 gp (at start of final encounter in this adventure with 10 charges).

Lucia Saralonde, female elf Drd7: CR 7; Medium humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 35; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +5; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk club +5 melee (1d6) or dagger +5 melee (1d4/19-20) or dagger +8 ranged (1d4/19-20); SQ Elven traits, low-light vision, spontaneous casting, nature sense, wild empathy, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (Small, Medium) 3/day; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +4, Search +3, Spellcraft +6, Survival +7 (+9 in aboveground natural environments), Spot +5, Use Magical Device +8; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Use Magic Device).

Spells Prepared (6/5/4/2/1; DC 12 + spell level): 0-level – *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *flare*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *virtue*; 1st-level – *charm animal*, *cure light wounds*, *entangle*, *faerie fire*, *longstrider*; 2nd-level – *barkskin**, *flame blade*, *fog cloud**, *gust of wind*; 3rd-level – *call lightning**, *cure moderate wounds*; 4th-level – *summon nature's ally IV*.

*Already cast. If Lucia is somehow prevented from casting *barkskin* earlier, reduce her total and flat-footed AC by 3.

Possessions: Club, daggers (x4), +1 leather armor, *switch of the unseelie* (10 charges remaining), emerald (1,000 gp), 40 gp.

Phinneas Muddey, male human Brd4: CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d6+4+3; hp 23; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk/Base Atk masterwork rapier +6 melee (1d6/18-20) or whip +5 melee (1d3) or masterwork shortbow +6 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Bardic knowledge +6, countersong 4/day, *fascinate* 4/day, inspire competence 4/day, inspire courage (+1) 4/day; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 19*.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Bluff +11*, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +13*, Disguise +4 (+6 acting)*, Gather Information +13*, Intimidate +6*, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Move Silently +4, Perform (wind instrument) +10*, Profession (herder) +3, Spellcraft +3, Tumble +5, Use Magical Device +9*; Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

Spells Known (3/3/1; DC 14* + spell level): 0-level – *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*; 1st-level – *alarm*, *cure light wounds*, *silent image*; 2nd-level – *scare*, *sound burst*.

*Includes temporary bonus from *potion of eagle's splendor*.

Possessions: Masterwork shortbow, arrows

(x20), masterwork rapier, whip, masterwork leather armor, *potion of eagle's splendor* (already taken), *scroll of glitterdust*, 2 gp.

Kelvin and Ambrose Wickworth, male human Com1/War1 (2): CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d4+1d8+4; hp 11; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk woodsman's axe +3 melee (1d6+3/x3); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Handle Animal +5, Profession (farmer) +4, Ride +5, Use Rope +5; Animal Affinity, Endurance.

Possessions: Woodsman's axe.

Arvik Duerlagg, male dwarf, War2: CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk greataxe +5 melee (1d12+4/x3) or dagger +5 melee (1d4+3/19-20) or dagger +3 ranged (1d4+3/19-20); SQ dwarven traits; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +0 (+2 armor, +2 stone and metal), Climb +6, Craft (armorsmithing) +4, Intimidate +4; Great Fortitude.

Possessions: Greataxe, studded leather, armorsmith's tools, 3 gp.

Wrapping Up

With Lucia's defeat, the *charm person* effect soon lifts from the townspeople (assuming the heroes didn't kill them). They are ashamed and angry at themselves for falling under Lucia's power. Still, they firmly believe that they saw the dryad kill Stefan, and they protest any effort to release or heal Tangle until she confesses. Anyone who succeeds at a DC 24 Spellcraft check considers that the four men's memories may have been magically modified. Only the sight of Stefan's corpse or the identification of the *switch of the unseelie's* powers will make the men question what they "saw."

Tangle regains her senses moments later. With a dry, rasping voice, she asks the adventurers to remove the painful cold iron shackles. The maimed dryad stares with growing concern at the shadows that continue to seep from the roots. She accepts any healing from the party, yet she says that time within the great oak will be the best balm – if it lives. If anyone asks whether such convalescence within the tree could help her reattach her leg, Tangle replies sadly, "I don't know – such a thing has never happened before."

Any character with the Knowledge (nature) skill realizes that the badly damaged oak is susceptible to plant disease and infestation, which could ruin any chance for its

survival. This can be prevented if the adventurers spend 2 hours tending to the tree, aided by Tangle's instructions; a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check cuts this time in half. A *plant growth* spell instantly heals the tree. Once treated, the great oak "donates" a walking stick to Tangle, as a branch conveniently falls near her.

Despite the pain she feels, Tangle bears no ill will toward the townspeople; she knows they were innocents under an enchantment. If the adventurers showed no mercy to the four men during the fight, she is furious and treats them as nothing better than crude mercenaries. Despite the fact that they rescued her, she gives them a curt nod of gratitude and retreats to the great oak to heal. That's all. The PCs shouldn't be rewarded for indifference to innocent life.

If the heroes showed compassion and attempted to subdue the *charmed* townspeople with nonlethal attacks, the dryad reacts much more favorably. Sensing that they are honorable, she explains the truth behind the rumors (see Background Story).

Tangle is the latest in a line of dryads charged with the protection and care of the tree. If anyone from the Known Realms has entered the mist-shrouded demiplane that is the home of the evil fey, they have not returned. She wisely refused to tell Lucia any of this, since the druid would likely have used this knowledge to find this domain and strike a deal with the Unseelie Court. However, the barrier to the dark realm is now clearly weakened, as evidenced by the winged fey that grabbed Lucia's soul. She suspects that other attempts to breach the barrier will come.

If the adventurers desire the *switch of the unseelie* and have earned the dryad's good will, she allows this on the condition that they take the staff away from this area. She worries that the proximity of such a powerful unseelie item could further weaken the portal.

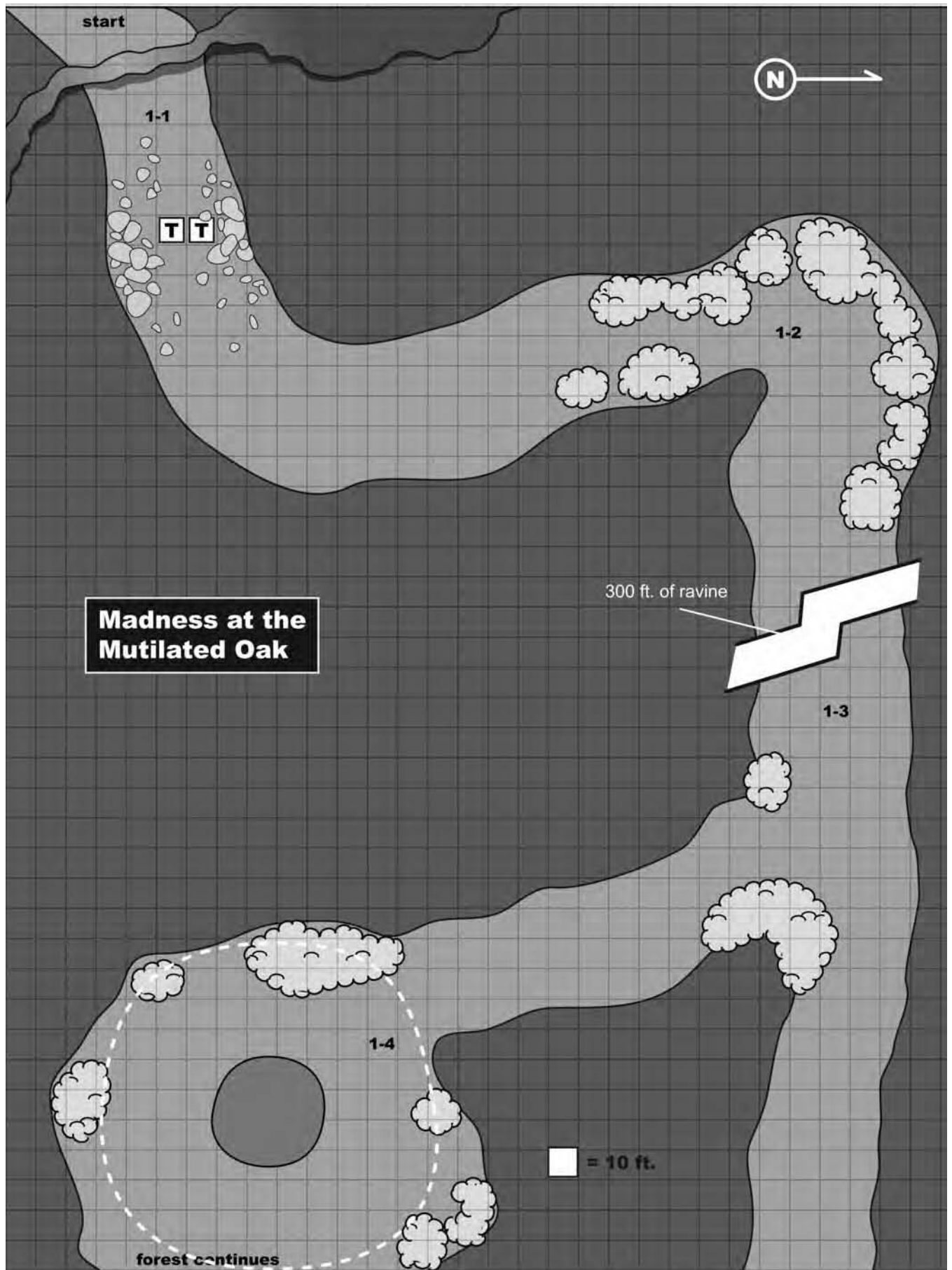
If they have no desire to keep the staff, Tangle promises to see to its destruction. Saying that she wishes to compensate them, the dryad disappears inside the oak for several moments. She returns holding several wooden amulets (one for each adventurer), seemingly made from the tree itself and bearing the image of the great oak. Each amulet is an *amulet of health* +2.

When the heroes leave Tangle and the great oak, read or paraphrase the following:

As you begin to lead the rescued townspeople back home, you suddenly hear a sound that is wonderful in its simplicity: the chirping of birds in the branches of the great oak. A sense of renewed life surrounds you, and the weariness in your bones gives way to the satisfaction and joy you feel at a job well done.

Further Adventures

The heroes may decide to head south to find out where the winged fey took Lucia's soul. Lucia could return to plague the adventurers as an undead, a new type of hyena-headed fey, or a combination thereof. She will seek to destroy the barrier and gain power from the Unseelie Court. The PCs could recruit Phinneas and the other townspeople as guardians of the great oak, although Lucia's new winged minions may know of other gateways to the fey's mist-shrouded home...



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Ghosts of the Mastodon Clan

By Brendan LaSalle

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Ghosts of the Mastodon Clan is an adventure for a party of 3-5 characters of 4th-6th level. Parties should be well-rounded. A ranger or other character with the Track feat is necessary for some, but not all, of the possible adventure hooks that bring the party to the cave.

Adventure Summary

Crime in the forest! Local bandit Merciless Ezdon and his band of miscreant outlaws waylaid a caravan and, unsatisfied with the meager plunder it offered, decided to kidnap Kina, the youngest child of the chief merchant. They have vowed to release her unharmed only when

their impossibly high price in gold and weapons has been met. The merchant saw them ride off to the south – meaning they must have found some trail out of the natural canyon in the foothills of the Trolltooth Mountains. But once they got there, they found an ancient surprise they hadn't expected...

More so than most adventures, the flow of Ghosts of the Mastodon Clan depends on the characters' actions. If they decide to aid the ghost, if they can translate the ghost's language, how they deal with the Kina dilemma – all of these factors can drastically alter the flow of the story. Read the entire scenario to understand what exists inside of the sacred caverns and let the action be ruled by the players' decisions.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type – this indicates if the encounter is a

trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). Encounter – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. EL – the encounter level.

| <u>Loc</u> | <u>Pg</u> | <u>Type</u> | <u>Encounter</u> | <u>EL</u> |
|------------|-----------|-------------|--|-----------|
| 1-3 | 17 | C | 4 bandits, human War1, <i>Merciless Ezdon</i> , minotaur-blooded Bbn3/Rog3 | 10 |
| 1-4 | 18 | C | Warhorse, light horse | 3 |
| 1-5 | 19 | C | <i>Dharv</i> , human ghost Clr6 | 8 |
| 1-8 | 21 | C | 3 earth mephits | 6 |
| 1-12 | 24 | C | Ochre jelly | 5 |
| 1-13 | 25 | T | Pit trap | 2 |
| 1-14 | 25 | T | Cursed throne trap | 8 |

Scaling Information

Although meant for 4th-6th-level adventurers, Ghosts of the Mastodon Clan can be run for parties of lower or higher level. Here is some advice for alterations to suit such groups:

Weaker Parties (lower than 4th level, or fewer than four characters): In area 1-3, remove *Merciless Ezdon*'s levels in rogue to make him a CR 5 barbarian. In area 1-4, remove the warhorse's training. Reduce the number of earth mephits in area 1-8 to 2 and replace the ochre jelly in area 1-12 with a gray ooze.

Stronger Parties (7th level or higher, or more than six characters): Increase the number of bandits in area 1-3 to six and make them 2nd-level fighters. Make the light horse in area 1-4 another warhorse trained with the same tricks as Barger. Increase the number of earth mephits in area 1-8 to four, and change the ochre jelly in area 1-12 to a black pudding.

Getting the Players Involved

Here are ways to get the party involved in the adventure.

- Proviselow, the merchant who was attacked, tells every local sheriff, guardsman, would-be hero and sympathetic ear of Kina's kidnapping. The ransom they demanded for her safe return is 1,000 gp – more than twice what he makes in a year. He begs help in finding her because his lame leg keeps him from heading out himself to aid the search.
- *Merciless Ezdon* believes the locals are too afraid of his infamous band to retaliate. The cretins weren't at all careful with their tracks. The characters could come across unmistakable signs of a struggle, tracks heading south, a gold coin and a rumpled baby doll. Let's see your paladin turn a blind eye to that!

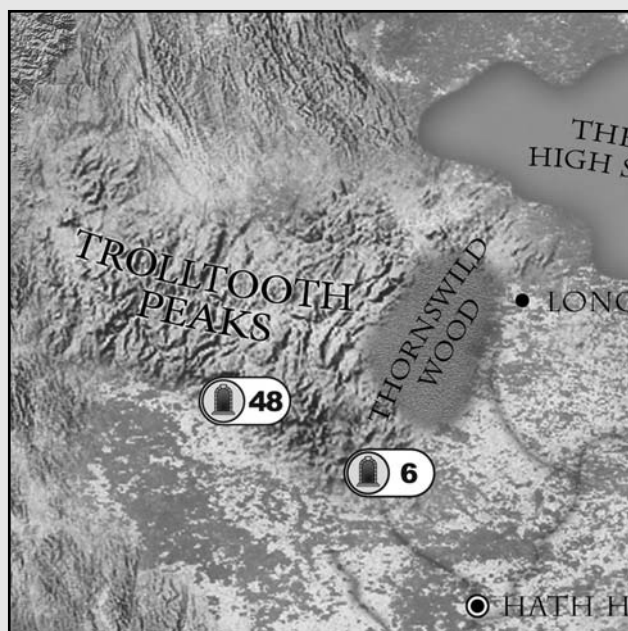
- It is entirely possible that the characters discover this cave on their own, perhaps seeking shelter for the night while pursuing a larger-scale campaign.
- *Merciless Ezdon* has made many, many enemies. The local baron might just ask the PCs to capture him as a favor, or a high-ranking guild member might order them to the task.

Background Story

Ezdon and his bandits arrive at the cave only hours ahead of the characters. It's a new hideout, so they quickly establish defenses and start setting up their camp. However, the cave isn't empty: it is the haunt of *Dharv*, the ancient ghost of the shaman of a tribe of Neanderthals. This ghost cannot rest until he finds a willing acolyte to carry on the worship of his ancient deity, Great Grandfather Mastodon. His plan is to pass on the tragic story of his people (how the brave leader of his tribe led his people on many successful hunts, grew arrogant and turned away from the Great Grandfather, then ran afoul of a dragon that all but wiped his people off the face of the earth). *Dharv* has haunted this cave for ages waiting for someone to come along to be the recipient of his teachings. He has finally found that individual: Kina, the daughter of the merchant.

DCC World

The deep crevasses and sharp ridges of the Trolltooth Peaks have long stymied explorers. Even the most wizened of track finders can easily become lost amongst the winding ravines, and only the local tribesfolk, descendants of a race of ancient hillmen, are ever truly at home here. The winding passages hold innumerable caves, hewn out by the rains, scouring winds, and sharpened claws of long forgotten beasts.



The Cavern of Great Grandfather Mastodon

Read or paraphrase the following:

Here in the foothills of the mountains, the air is heavy with mist. The land is so quiet that you can hear the breathing of your individual companions. As you approach the clearing, you see obvious tracks leading to a cave in a steep hillside. From the rubble strewn about its base, you would guess that this cavern was recently uncovered by a rockslide. You approach cautiously, aware of every sound in the still countryside.

This area has been haunted for thousands of years, and some of Dharv the Shaman's unnatural energy poisons the land and air nearby. A successful Survival check (DC 16) lets the characters know that there are no animals, nor even signs of animals, within 100 yards of the cave mouth.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Entry Cavern: Read or paraphrase the following:

The narrow cavern goes in five feet, then declines down sharply into darkness. The further you go the steeper the passageway becomes until you must steady yourself on the walls to keep from sliding forward. The downward tunnel twists and turns ahead of you.

A skilled tracker may notice that there is a definite path through the cobwebs near the ceiling, indicating that a taller-than-average humanoid passed through here recently (DC 10 Survival check).

Area 1-2 – Tripwire: Read or paraphrase the following:

The passageway levels out and turns south. Off in the distance you see a faint light. The cave has become extremely cold – you are beginning to see your own breath.

Characters who make a successful Listen check (DC 14) from this location hear the muffled sound of a stifled voice, possibly crying for help, after which a man with a harsh voice growls "Quiet down, you lunatic!"

The bandits took the time to put an improvised trip wire alarm here. It isn't a sophisticated device; the characters can find it with a DC 15 Search check, and a DC 13 Disable Device check can easily bypass it.

If the characters wander through area 1-2 without discovering it, the tripwire brings down a precarious

pile of battered steel shields, meant to warn the bandits of intruders. If the shields fall, the bandits in area 1-3 draw weapons, take defensive positions and prepare to attack.

The cold is a side effect of the centuries-old haunting of this place. If the ghost of Dharv the Shaman goes on to his eternal rest, the temperature in the cavern returns to normal.

Area 1-3 – Bandit Attack (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following if the characters avoided the trap in area 1-2:

You round the bend and see a small improvised camp. There are seven men here, one of whom towers over the others. He is a dangerous-looking humanoid with small horns on his head, a slightly bovine face and a wide nose. He is extremely hairy, with huge bushy eyebrows and a wide shaggy beard. He wears grimy studded leather armor and carries several weapons. The others are a motley band of scruffy humans, working to start a fire and set up some sort of camp.

Several full packs of gear are piled near the campfire. In a slight alcove on the north wall, two horses are tethered and look miserable. You see a young girl, disheveled and bound, leaning against the southeast wall with a sack over her head. Her muffled cries can still be heard, and a nearby guard shouts at her to be silent.

Read or paraphrase this section if the characters set off the alarm in area 1-2:

Rounding the corner, you see large cavern, apparently abandoned very quickly. A small fire burns in the center of the room. Several full packs of gear are piled near the campfire. In a slight alcove on the north wall, two horses are tethered and look miserable. You see a young girl, disheveled and bound, leaning against the southeast wall with a sack over her head. Her muffled cries can still be heard, but there doesn't seem to be anyone else here.

Tactics: If the characters have the advantage of surprise, the bandits do their best to defend themselves and their ill-gotten gains.

If alerted to the PCs' presence by the alarm trap, the bandits have hidden themselves in the dark recesses of the walls (assuming they all take 10, Ezdon has a total Hide check of 13 and his men have a total Hide check of 8). They attempt to ambush the characters from the shadows.



Merciless Ezdon is absolutely ruthless, and will do whatever he must to survive this encounter, even if it costs the lives of his band and the hostage. As the situation dictates, he might abandon his men and flee, mount his horse and flee, put a knife to the hostage's throat or any other low-down trick you find appropriate. In melee he spends a full round action putting out the fire by kicking dirt on it, allowing him to take advantage of his darkvision. He will also surrender and beg for mercy if the situation goes that far.

If he is questioned about the girl, Ezdon says he regrets ever taking her hostage. At first she screamed and cried to be returned, but after they reached the cave she started shouting gibberish and generally making a nuisance of herself.

Merciless Ezdon, minotaur-blooded Bar3/Rog3: CR 8; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 2d8+3d12+3d6+16; hp 54; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +7/+2; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d10+5, greatclub) or +11/+6 melee (1d4+4, dagger) or +11/+6 ranged (1d4+4, sling); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, fast movement, inbred cunning, trap sense +1, trapfinding, rage 1/day; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Disable Device +2, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +1, Listen +5, Open Lock +6, Ride +6, Search +4, Spot +5, Survival +3; Cleave,

Improved Bull's Rush, Improved Sunder.

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: +1 greatclub, masterwork sling, 22 sling bullets, 2 daggers, concealed knife, hide armor, thieves' tools, riding boots with a false heel containing 8 small diamonds (10 gp each).

While Raging: +16 hit points; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Atk/Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+7, greatclub) or +13/+8 melee (1d4+6, dagger) or +11/+6 ranged (1d4+6, sling); SV Will +4; Str 23, Con 18. Rage for 7 rounds, then fatigued for the remainder of the encounter (-2 Str, -2 Dex, can't charge or run).

Ezdon's Bandits, male human War1 (4): CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d10+2; hp 13; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d10+2, greatclub) or +3 melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d4+2/19-20, dagger); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ —; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Ride +5; Improved Initiative, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Greatclub, 2 daggers, hide armor, iron rations (1 week), waterskin, 3d10 sp and 2d6 gp each.

Area 1-4 – Makeshift Corral (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

There are two quality horses here, a light bay and a dun warhorse, tethered to a long rock. They huddle quietly together, eyes wide and ears back.

The bay horse was stolen from a nearby town and has no loyalty to the bandits whatsoever. The dun is a different story: it is Barger, Ezdon's well-trained mount of several years. The bandit whistle-trained the beast (*stay, come and attack* chief amongst the commands it knows).

Tactics: If the characters get near to the warhorse, Ezdon whistles and the horse rears and attempts to kick anyone who comes near. Barger is an excellent horse, but so faithful to Ezdon that he is nearly impossible for others to ride. At every opportunity the clever beast tries to throw or otherwise impede any would-be rider. He must be *charmed* or retrained to accept a new rider (a task equivalent to teaching him a new trick). Until then, would-be riders may find themselves flung, dragged or clotheslined off again and again and again.

Treasure: The horses' tack lies in a pile near their tethering rock, and characters who carefully search Ezdon's fancy nobleman's hunting saddle (Search

DC 17) may find a hidden hollow filled with carefully stowed loot: four tiny diamonds (10 gp each), a large high-quality emerald (worth 50 gp), a string of exquisite pearls (250 gp) and a tiny vial with a *potion of delay poison*. In addition, there is a tiny piece of parchment that appears to be some sort of map to an obscure destination (see sidebar).

Light horse: CR 1; Large animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 60 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +8; Atk -2 melee (1d4+1, hoof); Full Atk -2 melee (1d4+1, 2 hooves); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA –; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +4, Spot +4; Endurance, Run.

Barger, heavy warhorse: CR 2; Large animal; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk +6 melee (1d6+4, hoof); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+4, 2 hooves) and +1 melee (1d4+2, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA –; SQ low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +5, Spot +4; Endurance, Run.

Area 1-5 – Captive (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

The young girl, bound and sacked, bellows oddly and thrashes against her bonds with manic energy. Her dress is filthy and torn, and she wears only one shoe.

Kina has been possessed by the ghost of Dharv, the ancient shaman who has inhabited this cold empty place for thousands of years. He plans to initiate her as the first new priestess of Great Grandfather Mastodon since the time before legend. This is the first suitable person he has found since his death with the potential to end his lonesome suffering, and he is unwilling to give up possession of her.

Dharv used his *malevolence* ability to possess Kina's body, so her stats are enhanced with his (see below) and her voice is supernaturally deep and husky (most unlike that of an 8-year-old girl).

Development: Once freed from the bonds, Dharv (using Kina's body) greets the characters in his native language (an ancient dialect with almost no connection to any modern language the most astute and well-traveled adventurer might have encountered) and asks them to accompany him to view the Sacred Cave of the Mastodon. A language expert might have a chance to detect faint similarities of diction and grammar between the dialect of Dharv's people and that of the ancient tribes that once inhabited this area (DC 30 Knowledge: history).

Of course, the characters hear only gibberish unless they possess some magical means of translation. Should they have one, they hear the old ghost give this proclamation:

"I, Dharv, last shaman of the ancient and revered Great Grandfather of Mastodon, am here to act as the voice of the Ancient Ones. The spirits have brought this girl-child to me this day so that she may fulfill her great destiny. She shall become the next priestess of Great Grandfather Mastodon. All those assembled here are free to view the sacred history of my people as was recorded in the days of green grass and mighty hunting. Come and see the story, portrayed better than any voice can tell of it."

Dharv is not innately evil, but he is extremely impatient after so many years of solitude and hopelessness. The ghost grows exasperated and possibly irrational if the party does not do as he says. He cannot understand why they cannot understand his language, nor why they do not obey the words of the spirit-shaman (a terrible sin according to the custom of his tribe – he is used to near perfect deference). He will not allow the characters to leave the cavern, take Kina out of the cavern, or take anything out of the cavern. If they insist on doing so he will attack, using the vessel of Kina's body to cast

The Map

This map leads to wherever you want it to lead to: the next dungeon or encounter area, some unexplored part of your campaign world, or to nothing at all. One possibility would be to relate the map any of the adventures in DCC #46: The Book of Treasure Maps, at the GM's discretion.

If the map simply doesn't work into your plans, let the characters make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 20) to know that the area pictured is an empty part of the huge forest at the base of the Trolltooth mountains, a two-day ride from the location of this adventure. If they go there, they find a huge, recently excavated pit where Ezdon's treasure used to rest. Alternately, let them find a moderate treasure there (300 gp in a locked chest, Open Lock DC 22), buried six feet deep.



spells and use his spell-like abilities against them. If they attempt to turn the ghost, he will attack, *manifesting* and possibly using his *malevolence* against another player as the situation dictates.

Read or paraphrase the following if the ghost of Dharv ever *manifests* itself plainly to the characters:

You see the translucent form of a squat, highly muscled humanoid. If it is a human it is like none you have ever seen – squat and bow-legged with a pronounced brow and stooped demeanor. Its body is hairy and its long grey hair and beard are matted into thick locks. It hovers a few feet off the floor, eyes rolling about with something near madness.

If they do follow Dharv/Kina, he leads them through the concealed door (area 1-6) and throughout the caverns, eventually taking them to the Sacred Cavern of the Mastodon (area 1-10). Dharv will not help them fight off any of the creatures they encounter there, as he is unwilling to risk the body he wishes to become the next High Priestess of Great Grandfather Mastodon (although he may cast *cure* spells on anyone injured).

If the ghost of Dharv is defeated, he reforms here in the caverns in 1d4 days, using his *rejuvenation* ability. If the characters have looted the cavern, he swears vengeance against the defilers of the Sacred Cavern of the Mastodon, and spends the rest of his existence hunting them down and mak-

ing life as horrific for them as possible. (See “Concluding the Adventure,” p. 26.)

If the ghost of Dharv is forced from Kina, the little girl is terrified and disoriented. All she remembers is being taken from the caravan and brought to the cave – everything is fuzzy after that. All she wants is to be reunited with her family.

If Kina dies, the characters may find themselves in a great deal of trouble. If her demise becomes general knowledge they may just find themselves local outlaws, the target of avenging adventurers and the like. (See “Concluding the Adventure,” p. 26, for more consequences of Kina’s death.)

Kina, Com0, while possessed by the ghost of

Dharv: CR 8; Small humanoid (human); HD 1d3+1; hp 4; Init + 4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6, corrupting touch); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA corrupting touch, malevolence; SQ turn resistance +4; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 5, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Craft: fire building +2, Craft: stone carving +2, Diplomacy +3, Heal +9, Hide +8, Knowledge: ancient religion +3, Knowledge: tribal history +2, Listen +11, Search +8, Spot +11, Survival +9: Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Self Sufficient, Toughness, Track.

Languages: Ancient Mammoth Clan.

Corrupting Touch (Su): When Dharv hits a living target with its incorporeal touch attack, he deals 1d6 points of damage. Against ethereal opponents, he adds his Strength modifier to attack and damage rolls. Against nonethereal opponents, he adds his Dexterity modifier to attack rolls only.

Malevolence (Su): Once per round, Dharv can merge his body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (caster level 10th), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, Dharv must be manifested and must try to move into the target’s space; moving into the target’s space to use the malevolence ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (DC 16). A creature that successfully saves is immune to Dharv’s malevolence for 24 hours, and Dharv cannot enter the target’s space. If the save fails, Dharv vanishes into the target’s body.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 6th, 5/5/5/4, save DC = 14 + spell level): 0 – *create water, light, resistance (2), virtue*; 1st – *cause fear, command, enlarge person**, *protection from evil, sanctuary, shield of faith*; 2nd – *augury, bear’s endurance, bull’s strength**, *eagle’s splendor, spiritual weapon*; 3rd – *magic vestment**, *meld into stone, bestow curse (2)*.

* = Domain Spell.

Domains: Survival, Strength (1/day – +6 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 round).

The Ghost of Dharv the Shaman, Clr6: CR 8; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 6d12; hp 48; Init +3; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect): AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d6, corrupting touch) or +8 melee (1d8+4/x3, longspear, only when manifested, 50% miss chance); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA corrupting touch, malevolence, manifestation, turn undead; SQ rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 10, Con –, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +3, Craft: fire building +2, Craft: stone carving +2, Diplomacy +3, Heal +9, Hide +8, Knowledge: ancient religion +3, Knowledge: tribal history +2, Listen +11, Search +8, Spot +11, Survival +9; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Self Sufficient, Toughness, Track.

Languages: Ancient Mammoth Clan.

Corrupting Touch (Su): When Dharv hits a living target with its incorporeal touch attack, he deals 1d6 points of damage. Against ethereal opponents, he adds his Strength modifier to attack and damage rolls. Against nonethereal opponents, he adds his Dexterity modifier to attack rolls only.

Malevolence (Su): Once per round, Dharv can merge his body with a creature on the Material Plane. This ability is similar to a *magic jar* spell (caster level 10th), except that it does not require a receptacle. To use this ability, Dharv must be manifested and must try to move into the target's space; moving into the target's space to use the malevolence ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (DC 16). A creature that successfully saves is immune to Dharv's malevolence for 24 hours, and Dharv cannot enter the target's space. If the save fails, Dharv vanishes into the target's body.

Rejuvenation (Su): If the heroes destroy Dharv, he restores himself in 2d4 days with a DC 16 level check (1d20+6), and returns to the cave. Deciphering the tale of the Mastodon Clan allows him to rest.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 6th, 5/5/5/4, save DC = 14 + spell level): 0 – *create water, light, resistance (2), virtue*; 1st – *cause fear, command, enlarge person**, *protection from evil, sanctuary, shield of faith*; 2nd – *augury, bear's endurance, bull's strength**, *eagle's splendor, spiritual weapon*; 3rd – *magic vestment**, *meld into stone, bestow curse (2)*.

* = Domain Spell.

Domains: Survival, Strength (1/day – +6 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: +2 *animalbane* longspear, masterwork club, mastodon hide armor, stone food bowl, stone mortar. Note that these items are all ethereal.

Area 1-6 – Concealed Door: The concealed door is just a wide flap of mastodon hide covered in the dust and cobwebs of so many years that it seems to be a part of the wall. Once detected (Search DC 20) it pushes aside easily to reveal the passageway behind.

Area 1-7 – Ancient Living Chamber: Read or paraphrase the following:

This cold chamber might have been a living chamber at some point. Ancient mats of woven grass, now fallen into nothing more than patterned dust, cover the floor in a circle around a tiny fire pit ringed in stones. On an abrupt outcrop of rock, almost a natural peg, hang what appear to be two hide necklaces adorned with carefully shaped rocks.

This was an ancient sleeping chamber where a family lived in ancient times. The two necklaces are worth money to someone interested in such things (100 gp from a sage or collector).

Area 1-8 – Communal Fire Pit (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the center of this room is a huge fire pit, nearly six feet across, ringed with standing stones. The debris from several woven grass mats surrounds the fire. The ceiling is nearly 30 ft. high, and you see several large cracks that might once have acted as ventilation for the smoke of cooking fires. On the east wall is a small boulder with thousands of long scratches.

The boulder was used by Dharv's people to sharpen spears and tools. It is an excellent sharpening stone but otherwise has no value.

The cracks in the ceiling have allowed a gang of earth mephits to travel in and out at will. They love this quiet, remote cave and consider it their home away from their native plane. If intruders tarry too long, they fly down, first warning, then threatening, then attacking those who refuse to leave. Dharv has known about the mephits for years and has ignored them, but on this occasion, if he is still with the party in some form or other, he orders them out of the cave.

The mephits use team tactics, coordinating breath weapon attacks against spellcasters or lightly-armored characters as much as possible. If the fight against them goes badly, they may seek to escape

by flying out through the cracks in the ceiling, *summoning* aid and then returning.

Earth mephits (3): CR 3; Small outsider (earth, extraplanar); HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init -1; Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +7 melee (1d3+3, claw); Full Atk +7 melee (1d3+3, 2 claws); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA breath weapon, spell like abilities, summon mephit: SQ change size, damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2; AL CN: SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Escape Artist +5, Hide +9, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Intimidate +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +6, Use Rope -1 (+1 with bindings); Power Attack, Toughness.

Breath Weapon (Su): 15-foot cone of rock shards and pebbles, damage 1d8, Reflex DC 13 half.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*soften earth and stone*. Caster level 6th.

Change Size (Sp): Once per hour, an earth mephit can magically change its size. This works just like an enlarge person spell, except that the power works only on the earth mephit. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Fast Healing (Ex): An earth mephit heals only if it is underground or buried up to its waist in earth.

Area 1-9 – Sacred Cavern Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

As you pass into this large cave you see a startling sight. An enormous skull is mounted over the ceiling, with massive tusks that thrust into the room. The skull is ancient, covered in dust and black ice. Beneath it lies a passage heading south. The air here is very cold, and the silence complete.

Show the players Handout A. This is the antechamber to the ancient chamber where Dharv's clan recorded their history and held their rites to honor Great Grandfather Mastodon. The area is steeped in a strange energy – this is the place where Dharv, the last shaman of the Great Grandfather, died. Since the mastodon deity had no more living followers, it was cast into an extra-planar void, locked into a kind of existential torpor from which it could not escape. The residual energy shed by this supernatural event has given this chamber and the next (areas 1-9 and 1-10) some extremely unusual properties:

The cave is at a constant 30° F. Fires can burn but they give off less heat than a candle.

A successful Listen check (DC 10) allows the characters to hear the massive footfalls of some phan-

tom herd of mastodon off in the distance, with zero chance of pinpointing the source of the sound.

Any attempts to use divine magic, either through divine spells, spell trigger devices or scrolls, have a 50% chance of failure. The exception to this are spells, spell trigger devices or scrolls that create effects from the Survival domain spell list – *commune with nature*, *control weather*, *create food and water*, *detect animals or plants*, *find the path*, *foresight*, *plant growth*, *repel vermin*, and *sympathy* (see Great Grandfather Mastodon, p. 24, for full information on the Survival domain). Potions of all kinds function normally.

Summon monster or *summon nature's ally* spells cast here automatically fail. The summoned creatures arrive dead, and may not be *raised* or *resurrected*.

Area 1-10 – Sacred Cavern of the Mastodon Clan: Read or paraphrase the following:

You pass under the huge mastodon skull and into a long cavern, in which the walls are carved from ceiling to floor on either side with ancient pictographs. The carvings themselves are extremely small and very dense: it must have been the work of several lifetimes for masons using primitive tools. There are dozens of symbols that reoccur, some obviously standing for men and beasts, while some are less fathomable symbols.

Show the players Handout B. The carvings around the wall are the work of the shamans of Great Grandfather Mastodon. By sacred tradition, each shaman carved a version of their tribe's story. The pictographs show the most important story of the clan told 19 different times, repeated over and over in a series of symbols.

If the party has made an enemy of Dharv, the ghost attacks the party as they try to decipher the wall symbols, seeking to destroy them or force them to leave the cave. Even if he was earlier defeated, he appears again, his *rejuvenation* ability automatically working to bring him to the defense of the Sacred Cavern. (This automatic effect only works once – if Dharv is defeated a second time, his *rejuvenation* takes its normal time to work.)

If the party has made an ally of Dharv (whether or not he still possesses Kina's body), he stands by while the characters study, watching them. He refuses to aid: all requests for help or clarification are answered with a grunt while he points at the wall. Deciphering the story of the Mastodon Clan was a sacred task that a novice could not ask for help with, a sort of initiation into the priesthood.

A party studying the walls can decipher it only in stages. They must discern certain facts which then allow them to learn more. Characters studying the walls get different checks to learn different bits of information about the crowd. Learning some facts is dependent on previous discoveries. If characters make their individual findings known to their party, then the entire party gets to roll for the dependant facts. For example, if a player makes the first Intelligence check and discovers the eight major symbols, he may make this knowledge public so that the entire team can make the second Intelligence check to discover the ninth symbol.

All checks in the following list take 4-10 minutes of study. Taking a 20 is possible, but the characters must spend 30 minutes of study per check to do so. Characters do not have to learn these sets in any particular order – let their questions guide their discoveries. Also, the sets of information are not dependent upon one another; only the information within each set. If the party correctly supposes or guesses one of these clues, you can let them roll to learn other rules.

Set 1: An Intelligence check (DC 10) lets the character know that there are eight main characters: the Bent Man, the Mastodon, the Three Connected Men, the Tall Warrior, the Short Warrior, and the Woman. If this check is successful, the PC may make a second Intelligence check (DC 18) to note that there is a ninth symbol that only occurs once: the Winged Monster.

Set 2: A successful Intelligence check (DC 15) lets the PC know that the pictures tell some kind of coherent narrative. If this check is successful, a second Intelligence check (DC 15) lets the hero know that the story is read right to left. If this check is also met with success, a third Intelligence check (DC 18) lets the characters know that it is a single story told over and over again, with some discrepancies, many times.

Set 3: A successful Search check (DC 19) lets the character discover ancient dried blood in the grooves of some of the ancient carvings. Having made this check, the player can make an Intelligence check (DC 13) to note that only one of the several reoccurring figures has blood etched deeply into its cracks: the figure of the Mastodon. A successful Knowledge: religion check (DC 13) lets characters who know this realize that the blood denotes worship of the Mastodon, either as a divine being or a symbol of a divine being.

Set 4: A successful DC 15 Craft: stonemasonry check lets the characters know that the carvings are the work of multiple artists. If this check is success-

The Story of the Mastodon Clan

In ancient times before language and the dawn of history, humans were a scattered bunch who lived in disorganization, scavenging to survive in the harsh world. One of them was the Bent Man, who took it upon himself to climb to a mighty plateau to see the view from there. Once at the top, he looked over the far side and saw a Mastodon. The Mastodon spoke to the Bent Man, and promised a good life in exchange for the reverence of the Bent Man's people.

The Bent Man returned to the scattered people who become the Three Connected Men, a symbol of tribal unity. Through the Bent Man, the Mastodon taught the secrets of the hunt and of surviving the harsh winters. With this aid, the Three Connected Men became happy and content. The tribe, pictured by the Three Connected Men, produces three mighty offspring, the Tall Warrior, the Short Warrior and the Woman. The Tall Warrior and the Short Warrior hunt together and are amazingly successful.

The two Warriors become boastful, each bragging of his deeds to The Woman. The duo ceases to hunt together, instead going alone. Alone, neither is successful and the tribe goes hungry. The Woman falls ill because there is no food. Finally, the Bent Man gives the Tall Warrior and the Short Warrior a quest: they go together to find a new hunting ground. Working together, they cross a river and find a new hunting ground. They each save the other's life during the quest and they return to hunting together in friendship. The Three Connected Men prosper once more and the Woman is returned to health.

This story is carved into the walls 19 times. The last series has a hastily finished new ending to the story:

The new hunting ground attracts the attention of the Winged Monster, which makes a den there. It first greedily eats all the mammoths, then eats the Woman. The Tall Warrior and the Short Warrior work together to fight it, but the Winged Monster first kills the Short Warrior, then kills the Tall Warrior. One of the Three Connected Men escapes, comes to this cave and completes the record.

The survivor, of course, was Dharv.

ful, the character can make a second Craft: Stonemasonry check (DC 15) to know that one tiny series of pictures was done in haste, with a much smaller attention to detail and quality than all the others. Dwarvish characters get their stonemasonry bonus on these rolls.

Set 5: A successful Decipher Script (DC 14) lets a character know that the story is read from right to left. A second successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) lets the characters know the Story of the Mastodon Clan.

Characters who learn all of the facts from Set 1 and Set 2 can piece together the story of the Mastodon clan. Characters who discover Sets 1, 2 and 3 know the story and understand that the story of the Mastodon Clan was used in a kind of ritual. Characters who know all the sets know the story, the fact that the story was a ritual and that each new priest had to carve the story into a new section of the Sacred Cavern as a part of their holy duties.

A successful application of the *legend lore* spell lets the characters know the whole sad tale of the Mastodon Clan. Clever use of several spells (including *stone tell* and similar magics) can possibly aid the characters in discovering the above (GM's discretion). The tragic history of the story is too far removed from the present day for bardic knowledge to reveal any of it.

Once this story is fully understood by the characters, the soul of Dharv can go on to its great reward. He asks the characters to pass on the story of Great Grandfather Mastodon and the Mastodon Clan. Then he disappears, forever.

Area 1-11 – Burial Cavern: Read or paraphrase the following:

This wide cave is decorated with bones. Long, thick bones are crisscrossed on the walls and floors. There are dozens of small piles of carefully placed stones, each cairn no more than a foot high. There are heaps of ancient, tattered furs stacked about in various areas.

This was the burial chamber of Dharv's people. If the ghost is with them, he refuses to enter this place: the crossed bones are symbols of the protection of the dead and in the tradition of his people it prevents spirits from entering. The piles of stones are grave markers. This entire room is *hallowed*.

Among the pile of discarded hides is a poncho-style garment with thick tie-down thongs and a pair of hide greaves, which acts as a *cloak of improved cold resistance*.

Area 1-12 – Slime Chamber (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This chamber appears empty except for the dust of several centuries and a dozen tiny skeletons that might belong to rats. At the far north end of the chamber, you see the wall is sundered with many dozen thick cracks.

Attached to the 15-foot ceiling of this chamber is an ochre jelly, which crept in through the cracks on the wall and has been dining on rats ever since. This isn't to say that it would turn down a nice meal of Slow Adventurer.

New Deity: Great Grandfather Mastodon

Great Grandfather Mastodon gives the gifts of his noble progeny to ensure the survival of the primitive people of Dharv's world. For providing the single most important element of the survival of the region's Neanderthals, devotees always give thanks before and after the hunt and sacrifice the best parts of the mastodon kills to the Great Grandfather. Priests are expected to carve the story of Great Grandfather Mastodon and the Mastodon Clan in stone at some point during their religious career.

Alignment: Neutral Good

Domains: Nature, Protection, Strength, Survival

Typical Worshipers: Primitive Man

Favored Weapon: Fire-hardened Longspear

Survival Domain

Deities: Great Grandfather Mastodon, other ancient deities

Granted Power: You gain the Track feat and add Survival to your list of cleric class skills.

Survival Domain Spells

- 1 – *Detect animals or plants*
- 2 – *Create food and water*
- 3 – *Plant growth*
- 4 – *Repel vermin*
- 5 – *Commune with nature*
- 6 – *Find the path*
- 7 – *Control weather*
- 8 – *Sympathy*
- 9 – *Foresight*

Tactics: The ochre jelly drops down on the first individual to enter the chamber, attempting to defeat, dissolve and digest any organic matter it can get its pseudopods on.

Ochre Jelly: CR 5; Large ooze; HD 6d10+36; hp 69; Init -5; Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4; Base Atk +4; Grp +10; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d4 acid, slam); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA acid, constrict 2d4+3 plus 1d4 acid, improved grab; SQ blindsight 60 ft., split, ooze traits; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref -3, Wis -3; Str 15, Dex 1, Con 22, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills: Climb +10.

Acid (Ex): An ochre jelly secretes a digestive acid that dissolves only flesh. Any melee hit or constrict attack deals acid damage.

Constrict (Ex): An ochre jelly deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an ochre jelly must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Split (Ex): Slashing and piercing weapons and electricity attacks deal no damage to an ochre jelly. Instead the creature splits into two identical jellies, each with half of the original's current hit points (round down). A jelly with 10 hit points or less cannot be further split and dies if reduced to 0 hit points.

Area 1-13 – Pit Trap (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The floor of this chamber is thick with dust-covered straw mats. The walls are hung with the decayed remnants of several animal hides.

Midway down this passageway is a 20-foot-deep pit lined with sharp stones. Characters who walk across it get a Reflex save (DC 20) to jump back before falling in. Characters who fall in take damage from both the fall and the sharp stones, and will likely need aid getting out: the walls are steep, sharp and afford few handholds (Climb DC 22).

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. deep (2d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in 2 adjacent 5-ft. squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+2 each); Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 15.

Area 1-14 – Chieftain's Chamber (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the center of this chamber is an ancient throne of stone and ivory. The carved stone seat has two inset mammoth carvings which cross above it. Set on a narrow natural shelf in the west wall is a spear, adorned with feathers and topped with a sharp stone head. Around the room are scattered straw mats and the rubbish of ancient animal hides.

Characters will note that the symbol of the Tall Warrior (first seen in area 1-10) is carved into the back of the throne.

The spear hanging on the wall is a +2 *animal bane* spear, which has been borne by a long succession of the chieftains of Dharv's people.

The throne is magically cursed. If any of the players sit on it, the entire cavern begins to collapse. Once someone triggers the curse, read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a rumble deep in the earth. Cracks start to appear in the ceiling, and in the next instant, dust is everywhere. The rumbling gets louder and louder.

Any player immediately stating that they run for the exit to the cavern (and has a speed of at least 15 feet) escapes before the tunnels completely cave in. Those who fail to immediately leave (waiting two rounds or about fifteen seconds) find the ceiling coming down on their heads. They can either stand there and die, or run and try to escape. Characters who waited this long to flee must make a DC 13 Reflex save every round as they flee. If they fail, they take 1d6 damage from falling rocks and must make an DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid being knocked prone. Ten rounds after the debris starts falling, the roof caves in entirely and anyone left is crushed.

If the cave is destroyed before the players learn the entire secret of the Mastodon Clan (see area 1-10), the ghost of Dharv haunts them forever, appearing to bedevil them from time to time during their adventuring careers. (See "Concluding the Adventure" for more information.)

Cursed Throne Trap: CR 8; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; cavern collapse (10 rounds to escape or be crushed); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Concluding the Adventure

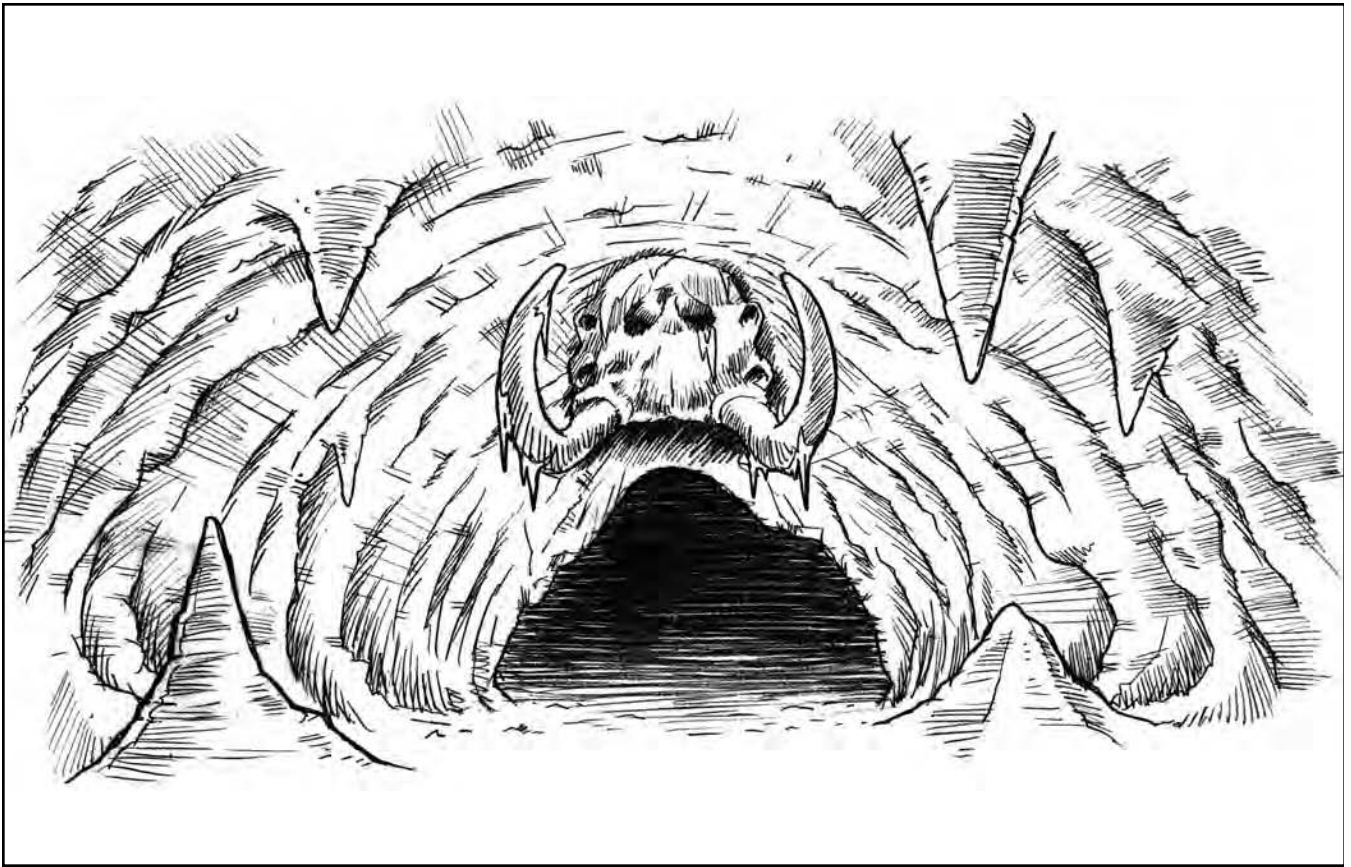
If the characters learn the story of the Mastodon Clan and free Dharv, the ghost goes on to its eternal rest, never to say so much as boo to another living soul. If you feel it's appropriate to your game, you might give the party a moderate XP bonus for figuring out the story (say 200-500 XP each).

If the characters make an enemy of Dharv and fail to learn the story of the Mastodon Clan, the ghost never lets them rest. For the rest of its existence, it returns every so often to haunt and bedevil the party, always at the least opportune moments. The party can destroy the ghost again and again, but it just continues to return until someone returns to the cave and learns the story.

If Kina is returned to her family, they are overjoyed. The grateful merchant offers the characters 250 gp worth of equipment (including weapons, armor and horses, if they wish). Kina herself is profoundly changed by the experience. She claims to dream of mastodons and hears the voice of Dharv every night. Perhaps she'll grow up to be a shaman...

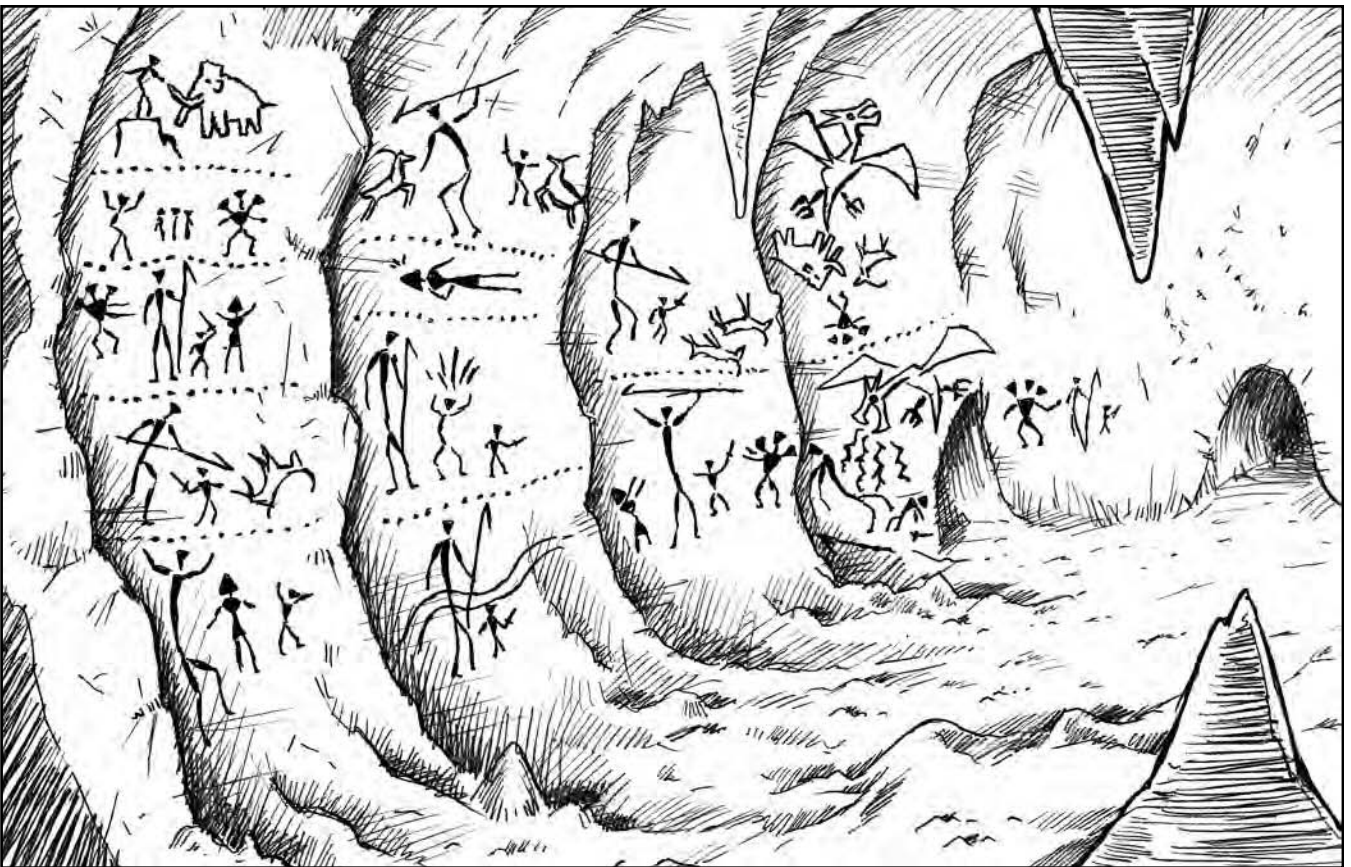
If Kina is killed in the cave, the necromantic effect of the cavern and the presence of Dharv cause her soul to become a ghost, which may or may not blame the adventurers for her death (GM discretion). If she does blame the party, she haunts them wherever they rest, no matter how many times she is defeated, until the characters commit some great act of atonement to her and her family.

If, by some strange confluence of circumstance and PC whimsy, one or more of the characters manages to either revive the worship of Great Grandfather Mastodon or take it up themselves, an amazing event occurs: Great Grandfather Mastodon himself awakens after the first ceremony is performed in his honor. He returns to minor deity status and can have clerics and grant spells. This cosmic event brings about the return of the mastodon, which had been largely extinct. Within a decade there are whole herds roving across the cold extremes of the world, perhaps providing sustenance to a new generation of followers. Need we specify that this all happens at the GM's discretion?



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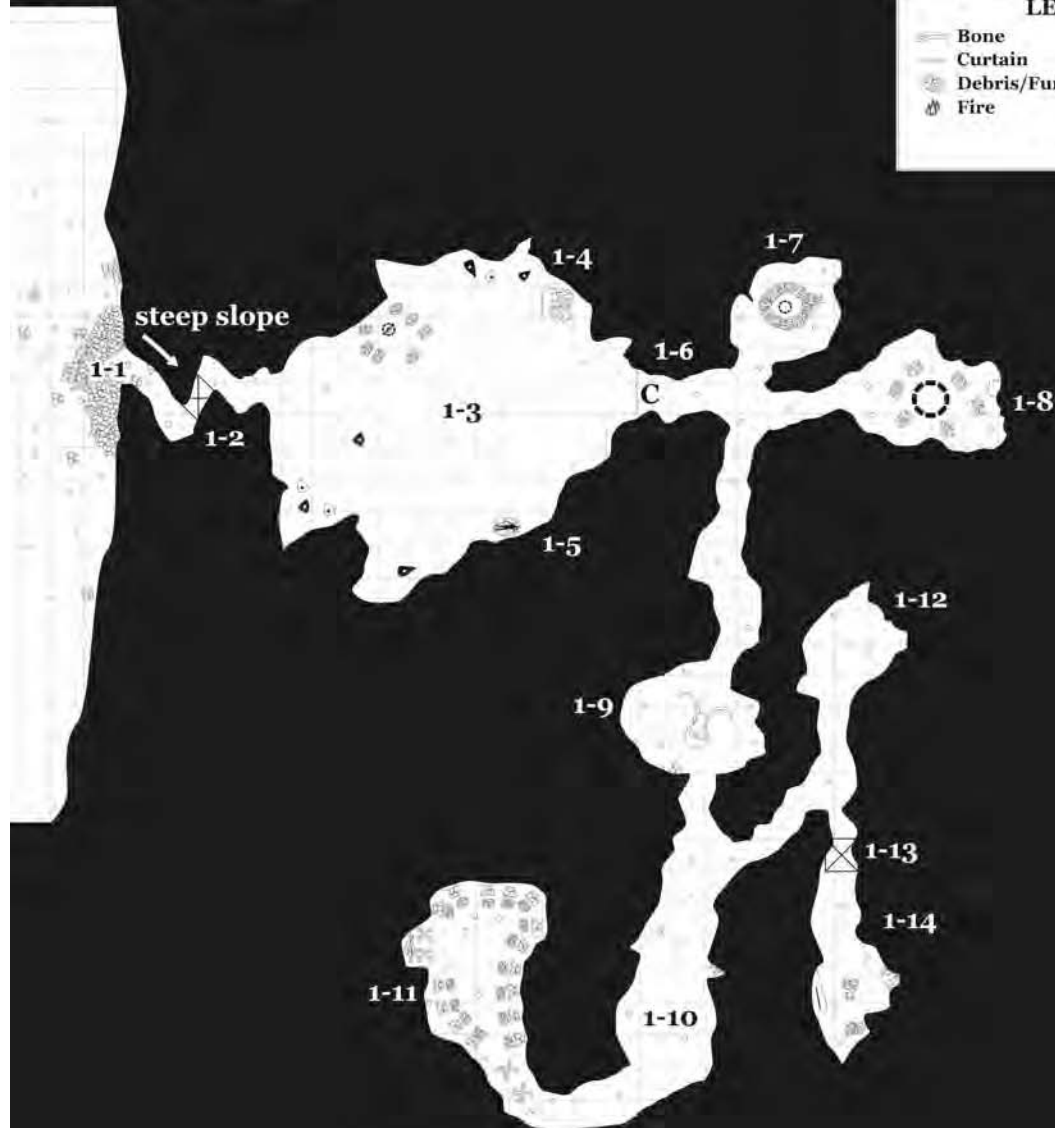


ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Ghost of the Mammoth Clan

1 square = 10 feet

| LEGEND | |
|---|----------------|
|  | Bone |
|  | Curtain |
|  | Debris/Fur |
|  | Fire |
|  | Fire Ring |
|  | Stalactite |
|  | Stalagmite |
|  | Stones |
|  | Concealed Door |



RSC

Dungeon Crawl Classics Heroes' End

By Stephen S. Greer
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Heroes' End is a short adventure designed for 4-6 characters of 4th through 6th level. We recommend 20-30 character levels between the party members. While characters can be of any basic character class, a good mix of character classes is helpful. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group's unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

The PCs enter a demiplane called *Heroes' End* and meet the citizens of a tent town full of failed adventurers. They learn that the only way out of the demiplane is to obtain 2 tokens that activate a *gate* back to their home world. Each token is guarded by powerful foes. To obtain

the first token, a lock of hair from a maiden trapped in a nearby tower, the PCs must defeat the implacable Black Knight who rides a massive charger named Maelstrom. However, not all is as it seems. The Black Knight is a charmed would-be hero whose mind has been poisoned by the damsel in the tower. She is a polymorphed succubus, a beautiful demon that seduces and devours potential rescuers. The PCs must find a way to get a lock of her hair by defeating her, convincing her to trade with them, or by other clever stratagems.

The second token is a magical shoe worn by a wizened dwarf harridan living in an enormous boot with her horde of children. The curious abode is called Fester Boot, and it is home to a family of feral cannibals: a dwarven crone named Ma and her score of "children," a family of halfling man-eaters kept in check by the old dwarf. Her right shoe is a powerful magic item that makes her nearly impervious to harm. The PCs must hack their way through the teeming mass of hungry halfling savages to get to Ma and claim the shoe. However, getting it from her poses an interesting challenge that will test the PCs' problem-solving skills and tactical ability.

Without these tokens the PCs face an uncertain future with the rest of the failed adventurers in *Heroes' End*.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|----|------|--|----|
| 1-1 | 33 | P | The Way Out Portal | – |
| 1-2 | 33 | C | <i>Korrigan One-Tusk Rufus</i> , hunting dog | 4 |
| 1-3 | 35 | C | <i>Sister Fairhand</i> | 4 |
| 1-4 | 35 | C | <i>Lord Riker of the House of Owls Sir Ethan</i> Servants (4) | 5 |
| 2-1 | 37 | C | <i>Lazlo the Carpenter</i> | 5 |
| 2-3 | 38 | C | <i>The Black Knight Maelstrom</i> , heavy warhorse | 5 |
| 2-4 | 39 | C | Strangle briars (2) | 5 |
| 2-5 | 39 | C | <i>Neareatha</i> (a.k.a. “Rapunzel”) | 7 |
| 3-2 | 42 | C | Debased halfling War1 (6) | 7 |
| 3-3 | 42 | C | Crow swarm (2)4 | |
| 4-1 | 43 | C | Mastiff (5) | 5 |
| 4-2 | 44 | T | Spiked pit trap | 5 |
| 4-3 | 44 | C | Debased halfling War1 (4) | 6 |
| 4-7 | 45 | C | “Ma” | 8 |
| 4-10 | 47 | T | Metal Coil Trap | 4 |

Scaling Information

Heroes' End is designed for four to six characters of levels 4-6, but may be adjusted to suit parties of different sizes or levels. To begin with, adjust all NPC character levels up or down, as appropriate, by a number equal to that which the average party levels of your group deviates from 4-6. Remember to alter the treasure appro-

priately. Some specific changes to the adventure should include:

Weaker Parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 4th level): At area 2-4 change the strangle briars to normal briars infested with 2 spider swarms. Replace Neareatha in area 2-5 with a harpy. Give her a level of sorcerer with *charm person* and *disguise self*. Remove one or two of the debased halfling warriors from each encounter involving them. Remove one or two of the mastiffs from area 4-1. At area 4-2, use a CR 3 spiked pit trap (see *DMG*, Chapter 3, Traps).

Stronger Parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 6th level): Add 2-3 spider swarms infesting the strangle briars in area 2-4. Advance Neareatha's HD by two to four, increasing her CR to 8 or 9. Add one to three more debased halfling warriors to each encounter with them. Add an additional 1 or 2 crow swarms to area 3-3. Add two to three more mastiffs to area 4-1. Change the trap in area 4-10 to a CR 5 Fusillade of Darts trap (see *DMG*, Chapter 3, Traps).

Getting the Players Involved

Heroes' End can only be entered via a *gate* opened by the *Tome of Tales* (see the *Tome of Tales* sidebar). The *Tome of Tales* lures adventurers into the numerous fairy tale demiplanes it connects to. Your job as the GM is to play the cunning trickster, and to get your players to enter the *gate* to Heroes' End. Below are suggestions on how to accomplish this.

A favorite of the *Tome's* tricks is to create an illusion in a dungeon or other locale of something appealing to PCs (a treasure chest, a library full of priceless tomes, a short hallway ending at a special looking door, etc.) with its *major image* ability. It then opens a *gate*, concealed by the illusion, in a spot where the PCs will unknowingly walk through it.

The *Tome of Tales* replaces a spellbook or other magical text a PC recently purchased. When he attempts to use it, the *Tome of Tales* opens a *gate* around him and closes it before the character can escape. When the rest of the player characters come looking for their friend, the *Tome* opens a disguised *gate* and mimics their ally's voice to lure them in (+14 Bluff modifier and speaks Common, Abyssal, Draconic, and Sylvan). Add the original book the PC purchased to the adventure as extra treasure.

Although this entails eliminating the *Tome of Tales* as the facilitator in getting the PCs to Heroes' End, you can drop a malfunctioning teleportation device into the adventure you run prior to this one. PCs stepping into its area of effect are sent on a one-way trip to Heroes' End.

Features of Heroes' End

Heroes' End is loosely styled after the themes of the children's tale "Rapunzel" and the nursery rhyme "There was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." You and your players may recognize references to other familiar stories as well. Heroes' End has the following planar traits. All other aspects are normal.

Self-Contained Shape. Heroes' End is hemispherical in shape and measures approximately 50 miles across. Its borders wrap, so if the PCs reach an edge they simply pass through to the opposite side.

Divinely morphic. Heroes' End is alterable by the deranged god that created it. Mortals must use spells or physical effort to affect a change here.

Mildly Chaotic-aligned and Evil-aligned. Lawful and good creatures take a -2 circumstance penalty on all Charisma-based checks in Heroes' End.

Enhanced and Limited Magic. Spells and spell-like abilities from the Enchantment school are extended (as the Extend Spell metamagic feat, but the spells do not require higher-level slots). As a demiplane, there is only one way in (the *Tome of Tales*) and one way out (The Way Out Portal), but see below. Spells and spell-like abilities with the teleportation descriptor function as

long as they transport the caster within Heroes' End. A spell such as *plane shift* intended to transport the caster out of the demiplane simply does not function, but is still lost as a prepared spell, spell slot, or use of a spell-like ability for the day. Spells with the teleportation descriptor cast from other planes may sometimes malfunction and bring visitors *into* the demiplane through a sort of fluctuating one-way "back door."

Guardian Rejuvenation. The guardians of the 2 tokens needed to open The Way Out Portal are unique in that Heroes' End restores them to their former state after they have been slain or otherwise defeated.

Background Story

Once upon a time there lived a wizard named Dolerous. Amongst his other interests, he had a great love and fascination for children's stories, fairy tales, and other fantastical works of fiction. During his many journeys and adventures he built up an impressive library of books and tomes on these subjects. As he grew older, Dolerous became increasingly erratic in his behavior and was viewed as eccentric in the extreme by some, and stark, raving mad by others.

Late in his life, he disappeared into his library and began the long and arduous task of compiling an abridged collection of all his favorite stories. He named this large work of literature "*Tome of Tales*." The more Dolerous worked on his masterpiece, the more he wanted to make it something unique, something the world had never seen before. He tried various magical enhancements and experiments, but they all fell short of his grand vision.

During his research, Dolerous came across an ancient set of scrolls he had forgotten about. The scrolls outlined a magical rite that involved calling upon a mysterious god of great power, but of unpredictable nature and caprice. Dolerous seized upon the idea of conducting the rite to empower his book with all of the grand powers he envisioned for the *Tome of Tales*, aware, yet unconcerned of the dangers it entailed.

Dolerous prepared the *Tome of Tales* for the magical rite, and went through all of the steps outlined in a ritual that lasted for several days. Infused with the power of this mysterious god of chance, luck, and insanity, the book was ensorcelled with tremendous power, sentience, and a capricious will. Using Dolerous as a conduit, the divine entity created numerous small, infantile demiplanes budding from a single nexus – the *Tome of Tales*. Each young demiplane grew and developed into twisted progenies of the collective imagination of Dolerous and the crazed god.

During the next few months Dolerous found that the magical tome could take him to small worlds where the

DCC World

The ubiquitous Tome of Tales (detailed in Appendix II and in *Dungeon Crawl Classics* #38: *Escape from the Forest of Lanterns*) can be found nearly anywhere across the face of Aereth, but the mighty codex was last reported in the hands of Gol'zul of the Seven Tongues, a rapacious warlock of no small ambition.



Tome of Tales (Minor Artifact)

This large, bulky book is bound in dark brown leather and tied with a chord of braided, black unicorn hair. Created by a powerful wizard with the direct aid of a mysterious god, this book of children's stories and fairy tales possesses great intelligence. It is a gateway to numerous demiplanes, budding from the book's central nexus like grapes on a vine. The demiplanes are perverted reflections of the stories within the tome. Such is the nature of the *Tome of Tales* that its very presence in any locale twists fate and circumstance in odd ways. A house may be struck by lightning and burn to the ground on a clear day or a gambler might win a fortune, but suddenly die choking on a bit of food.

The *Tome of Tales* appears randomly throughout the known worlds. Wherever it appears, strange things happen and often people disappear mysteriously.

The *Tome of Tales* speaks and reads Common, Abyssal, Draconic, and Sylvan.

Tome of Tales: book of fairy tales; AL CN; Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 18; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision, blindsense, and hearing; Ego score 21.

Lesser Powers: 10 ranks in Bluff (+14), Knowledge (local) (+14), and Knowledge (the Planes) (+14)

Greater Powers: At will – detect thoughts, major image; 3/day – clairvoyance

Special Purpose: Draw creatures into its fairy tale demiplanes

Dedicated Power: Gate at will, and the spell effect may take any visual form it desires

Personality: The *Tome of Tales* often goes by "Tom" when interacting with others. Tom learns as much as possible about new groups of people before revealing itself. When it does, it is quite chatty and freely regales listeners with the tales penned on its pages, even creating extravagant illusions to accompany the stories it contains. When it finds one that catches its listeners' fancy, it creates a portal to one of its demiplanes and transports its audience there, preferably without their knowledge since it loves surprises. It can accomplish this quite easily by masking planar travel behind illusions. When questioned about other subjects, Tom is courteous, but evasive, steering the subject back to the stories it enjoys telling.

Strong conjuration; CL 20th; Weight 3 lb.

stories he so loved were given life. However, during what would be his last visit, he met an untimely end in one of the newly formed demiplanes, the first of his creation's many victims. The tome then disappeared to spread its mischief elsewhere in the known worlds, nesting in dragon hoards, wizard's libraries, and more mundane locales, waiting to be found.

Player Beginning

However you decide to transport the PCs to Heroes' End, read the following once you have affected their arrival.

The world seems to tilt and drop out from beneath you. Everything is dark... After a moment of disorientation, you suddenly find yourself standing on a grassy knoll overlooking a small settlement made up of a motley collection of tents ranging from simple one-man affairs to a luxurious pavilion fit for a king. Mixed among the tents are a few poorly built log buildings one might find in a simple thorp. Men and women dressed in armor and bristling with weapons mingle with robed academicians, minstrels, and goat herders. The community appears to be built around a large stone arch, which serves as a curious town square.

Rolling hills blend with meandering streams, small forests, and soaring mountain peaks in the distance. White puffy clouds drift lazily across a summer sky. Everything seems idyllic and peaceful, yet you feel an itching "wrongness" about it.

Character Death, Level Advancement, and Gear

Since this adventure takes place in a closed demiplane that has trapped many adventurers, you have a large pool of possible replacement characters you can draw from. The exact motivations and backgrounds for each replacement PC are left up to you and your players to work out.

GMs that award experience points at the end or beginning of each session should allow the characters to level up during the adventure any time they attain enough XP to do so.

The town is stocked with simple things one might find in a small community, but it lacks specialized items such as magical scrolls, potions, and even some of the basic gear in the equipment section of the *PHB*. However, some of the NPCs in the tent town might be convinced to trade items they have in their possession or craft them if they possess the skill.

Level 1: The Tent Town of Failed Heroes

This community is unique in that its citizenry is made up of adventurers that want to escape the demiplane. There is a communal feeling of temporariness, thus most of them live in tents that can be taken down quickly once they see an opportunity to leave Heroes' End. Upon entering the town, the PCs are sure to attract a crowd wanting to know where they came from and if they have the tokens for the arch (see The Way Out Portal below). Others simply watch the PCs suspiciously or see them as more additions to the sorry collection of adventurers living there.

A few NPCs have stats provided. Feel free to populate the rest of the town as you see fit. Chapter 4 of the *DMG* has a few sample NPCs already generated for immediate use. As a general rule, none of the NPCs should have class levels higher than the player characters.

Tent Town (thorp): Nonstandard; AL N; Population: 61; 40 gp limit; Assets: 120 gp; Mixed (human 79%, halfling 9%, elf 5%, dwarf 3%, gnome 2%, half-elf 1%, half-orc 1%)

Authority Figures: Lord Riker of the House of Owls (area 1-4); Sister Myriam Fairhand (area 1-3); Korrigan One-Tusk (area 1-2)

Wandering Monsters

There are no wandering monsters here, however, PCs entering the territory of hostile citizens may find trouble there if they aren't careful.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – The Way Out Portal: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Rising 20 ft. into the air, this ancient-looking arch is approximately 15 ft. across and 10 ft. thick where it sinks into the earth. It tapers slightly as it rises, reaching a width of about 5 ft. at its arch. Letters engraved prominently at the top read, "The Way Out." Near the base of each column are small niches with symbols and words engraved over them.

The left column bears a symbol of a braid or perhaps a coil of rope. Above it are the words, "A lock from fair Rapunzel's head." The right column bears a symbol of a boot. The engraving above it reads, "The wretched mother's shoe."

The arch is aptly named, and serves as a teasing reminder to the trapped adventurers living around it that the means of their escape is so near. The arch

radiates strong conjuration magic. By placing a lock of hair from Neareatha's head (area 2-5) and Ma's magic *iron shoe* (area 4-7) in the correct niches, a *gate* opens to the PCs' home world, which lasts for 1 round. It then dissipates and the tokens disappear. The *iron shoe* returns to Fester Boot (see that section for more details). The process of obtaining the tokens must be repeated to open the portal for anyone that didn't make it through.

The arch is made of magically treated stone.

Gate Portal: magically treated stone arch; 5-10 ft. thick; hardness 16; hp 1,080 per 10 ft. section; SR 32; Break DC 70; Climb DC 22

If the PCs acquire the tokens and place them in their niches, return to this section and read or paraphrase the following.

A light flashes between the arches and is suddenly replaced by a familiar scene: home. A breeze wafts through the portal carrying with it all of the scents you remember from your homeland, but the image begins to waver, as if they are about to disappear in the next moment!

Call for Initiative from your players after reading the above. Do not explain why. The PCs have a single round to get through the portal before the *gate* closes on 1 in the Initiative order (in case of a tie the *gate* has a +0 modifier). Any PCs failing to get through it in time are stuck in Heroes' End until they acquire the tokens again. See the Concluding the Adventure section for suggestions on how to deal with this.

Area 1-2 – "One-Tusk's Eatin' Shack" (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This log hut has a single large window with a flat wooden counter extending from it and a single door around the corner. A burly half-orc wearing a crudely made apron leans out the window smoking a long wood and silver pipe. A sign above the window reads "One-Tusk's Eatin' Shack."

This simple establishment serves up surprisingly tasty fare, including boar, pheasant, rabbit, and wild fruits and vegetables.

Korrigan's tent is a dozen feet away. It is made of stitched together hides and comfortably holds up to 4 occupants, though only he and his hunting dog Rufus use it.

Korrigan quickly saw his worth as an experienced woodsmen and hunter among the “softer” adventurers living here and built the only eatery in the community. Many of the other citizens could probably hunt and forage on their own, and some do, but many of them don't bother since Korrigan is willing to do it for them. Whether they mind Korrigan's arbitrary fees or not, the townsfolk pay and have become increasingly dependant on the half-orc ranger.

Development: Korrigan had been hunting a magnificent white stag when he suddenly found himself in the Eastern Woods of Heroes' End, snared by the *Tome of Tales*. Korrigan discovered the others stuck here and has made the best of his situation. He is loyal to no one except Rufus his hunting dog. He is neutrally pleasant unless flagrantly insulted or attacked.

The prices of “One-Tusk's Eatin' Shack” change to match what each customer can trade. Korrigan sometimes accepts IOUs, which he can collect on whenever he wants. Some residents have worked out deals as part-time employees in exchange for food. There's usually at least one person helping here, often covering for Korrigan when he leaves to hunt.

Korrigan One-Tusk, Male Half-Orc Rgr4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (half-orc); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk masterwork spear +9 melee (1d8+6/x3) or +1 *composite long bow* [+4 Str] +8 ranged (1d8+5/x3); Full Atk masterwork spear +9

melee (1d8+6/x3) or +1 *composite long bow* [+4 Str] +8 ranged (1d8+5/x3) or +1 *composite long bow* [+4 Str] +6/+6 ranged (1d8+5/x3); SA Favored enemy animals +2; SQ Animal companion, combat style (archery), darkvision 60 ft., empathic link, half-orc traits, share spells, wild empathy +4; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Craft (bowmaking) +4, Hide +5, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Profession (cook) +5, Search +4, Spot +5, Survival +7, Swim +6, Use Rope +5, Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Possessions: +1 *studded leather*, masterwork spear, +1 *composite longbow* [+4 Str], quiver with 20 arrows, backpack, bedroll, fish hook and line, flint & steel, 50 ft. silk rope, trail rations (3 days), waterskin.

Rufus, Male Hunting Dog: CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk bite +3 melee (1d6+3); SA –; SQ Bonus trick, low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Jump +8, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +3, Survival +1 (+5 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Track.

Tricks Known: Attack, Come, Defend, Down, Guard, Heel, Seek, Track.

Problems with the Locals

How the PCs go about opening the gate portal once they've obtained the tokens may be problematic. All of the NPCs in town have been waiting for something to happen at The Way Out Portal. Most of them have figured out what they need to do to open the *gate*, but have failed in their attempts.

If the PCs make no effort to hide the fact that they have the tokens, Lord Riker may attempt to organize the tent town citizenry into groups based on how long individuals have been trapped in the demiplane. Those that have been trapped the longest will be first through the *gate* when it opens, and those that have come more recently will leave in groups to follow (which would put the PCs last in line!). Only a quarter of the people would be able to get through in time.

On the other hand, there are a few unsavory types that may attempt to take the tokens from the PCs by force, and others that may try to buy the tokens from them. Korrigan and a few of his friends might fall into the category of those willing to part with nearly anything in trade for the tokens and resort to force if that doesn't work.

Others may simply latch onto the PCs and attempt to include themselves in their party, tagging along everywhere they go, shadowing their every move so they won't get left behind.

Probably the most convenient way of getting home without these hassles would be to simply sneak out with Hide and Move Silently checks. Of course, PCs sympathetic to the plight of the rest of the failed heroes may try to come up with their own plan to get everyone home. All of the above can make for an entertaining series of events.

Area 1-3 – The Infirmary (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A sign near the entrance of a large tent made of smaller stitched together tents and blankets reads: “The Infirmary.” The open tent flaps reveal several makeshift cots in neat rows and a thin tarp separating this area from another section at the back.

This Infirmary measures 10 feet by 25 feet. It is the home and workplace of the only cleric in the community, Sister Myriam Fairhand. While perusing her holy texts one evening, she found that the *Tome of Tales* had replaced them. The book beguiled her into Heroes’ End and she has been here ever since. The townsfolk in Heroes’ End defer to Sister Myriam in most spiritual matters, and she has proved invaluable as a healer.

There are 6 cots in the infirmary made from animal hides stretched over simple wooden frames. The partition at the back of the tent conceals Sister Fairhand’s small sleeping area and shrine to Delvyr (or any benevolent deity you wish to substitute).

Development: If your party lacks a cleric or other character class with healing abilities, Sister Fairhand can provide healing for them. Whether she demands any kind of payment or barter for her services is up to you.

Sister Myriam Fairhand, Female Human Clr4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +1 *heavy mace* +6 melee (1d8+2); SA Greater turning 1/day, turn undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+6); SQ Aura of good, spontaneous casting (*cure* spells); AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +4, Heal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +5, Profession (healer) +8, Spellcraft +2; Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Heal), Weapon Focus (Heavy Mace).

Spells (5/4+1/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level; Domains: Healing, Sun): 0 – *create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2) (CL 5), *detect magic*, *detect poison*; 1st – *bless*, *comprehend languages*, *cure light wounds* (CL 5)*, *deathwatch*, *sanctuary*; 2nd – *cure moderate wounds* (CL 5)*, *delay poison*, *hold person*, *spiritual weapon*. *Domain spell.

Possessions: masterwork chain shirt, light wooden shield, +1 *heavy mace*, *cloak of resistance* +1, 4 *potions of cure light wounds* (CL 5), belt pouch (10 gp and 18 sp), cleric’s vestments, healer’s kit, spell component pouch, waterskin.

Area 1-4 – Lord Riker’s Pavilion (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A magnificent pavilion occupies a large swath of ground. Within, several folding wooden chairs surround a collapsible table covered with teacups, saucers, and a teakettle. A man of obvious nobility wearing a fine red silk doublet with a crest depicting a black owl on a checkered background occupies one of the chairs, while another man in simple leather armor and tunic occupies the one opposite him. Several servants stand ready to serve them.

This is the pavilion of Lord Riker, a paladin and nobleman of the House of Owls. He was tricked into Heroes’ End while exploring a dungeon with Sir Ethan (the man sitting at tea with him) and their entourage of retainers.

Lord Riker is a man of order and reason, and he naturally assumed the role of leader in Heroes’ End. He frequently patrols the area on foot with his entourage, offering assistance or advice (whether it is wanted or not), acting as arbiter and judge in disagreements, and boosting the morale of the citizens. Naturally, not all of the citizens like having a paladin around. There are several thieves, a necromancer that keeps his practices hidden, and a murdering soldier that all have reasons to want Lord Riker out of the picture. The rest cannot help but like and admire him.

Development: Lord Riker and his companion, Sir Ethan, are more than willing to assist the PCs in finding a place to bed down, provide some basic information about the lay of the land, and introduce them to other NPCs like Korrigan and Sister Fairhand. Lord Riker, like everyone else in Heroes’ End, knows about the tokens that are needed to open the gate, but advises that the risk of death is so incredibly high that such a venture is simply not worth the risk. He attempts to persuade the PCs to blend in with the rest of the citizens and try to make the best of their new lives. Lord Riker is no coward; he has simply seen too many visitors die trying to get the tokens, and has even failed to do so himself, though he lived to tell about it. If the PCs are determined to get the tokens (which they should be), he wishes them luck and warns them about the Black Knight guarding Rapunzel’s Tower and the vile man-eating children (he only knows the halflings’ descriptions secondhand) living in Fester Boot.

Lord Riker of the House of Owls, Male Human Ari2/Pal3: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d8+2 plus 3d10+3; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +4; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +1 *longsword* +8 melee (1d8+3/19-20)

or composite longbow [Str +2] +4 ranged (1d8+2/x3); SA Smite evil 1/day (+3 to hit, +3 to damage); SQ Aura of courage, aura of good, detect evil, divine grace, divine health, lay on hands (9 points); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +16, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Ride +5, Sense Motive +6; Power Attack, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: +1 *breastplate*, masterwork light steel shield with black owl crest, +1 *longsword*, dagger, composite longbow [Str +2] with 20 arrows, *potion of bull's strength* (CL 3), *potion of cure light wounds* (CL 1), backpack, belt pouch (25 gp, 30 sp, 10 cp), noble's outfit, silver holy symbol, waterskin.

Sir Ethan, Male Human Ftr2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d10+4; hp 15; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk masterwork greatsword +6 melee (2d6+3/19-20) or short sword +4 melee (1d6+2/19-20); SA —; SQ —; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Handle Animal +7, Jump +3, Ride +5; Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Handle Animal), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Possessions: +1 *studded leather*, masterwork greatsword, short sword, backpack, belt pouch (5 gp, 10 sp, 28 cp, pearl worth 100 gp), explorer's outfit, waterskin.

Servant, Male Human Exp1 (4): hp 4 each; Profession (servant) +8.

Level 2: Rapunzel's Tower

A 40-ft. tower of aged white marble partially covered in ivy and briars creeping up its sides is nestled in a small clearing in a copse near the Eastern Woods. The briars grow much thicker around the base of the tower, forming a natural, prickly barrier against trespassers. The plants conceal a stout door into the tower, which is locked and stuck from disuse. The tower has a single narrow window at its topmost level that looks down onto the clearing and the path that leads up to it. The ground level is simply an empty chamber with a winding staircase along the inner wall climbing to the chamber above.

A succubus named Neareatha has been imprisoned here for as long as the demiplane has existed. The upper level of the tower acts as a magic summoning circle, focused inward to keep her there. She may only be released when she has lured 666 living souls into her prison. She has a long way to go, but she is ambitious and patient.

Neareatha poses as the storybook damsel in distress, Rapunzel, trapped in the tower by an evil witch. She knows about The Way Out Portal, and that a lock of her hair is needed to activate it. However, she has no intention of letting her hair go so easily. Her boudoir is littered with the bones of past heroes that have clambered through her window in hopes of gaining one of her precious locks. She knows that many of the residents of this demiplane are trapped here, and if she must endure this place then so shall they.

Rapunzel's tower window is 25 ft. from the ground level. It measures 4-ft.-high-by-2 1/2-ft.-wide; thus, only one person of Medium size may squeeze through it at a time.

Tower Walls: 5 ft. thick; hardness 8; 450 hp; Break DC 50; Climb DC 15

Tower Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; 20 hp; Break DC 23, Open Lock DC 27; Search DC 20 to locate

Wandering Monsters

There is a 10% chance (1-2 on d20) every hour spent traveling along the Eastern Road or the hilly grasslands and copses nearby that the PCs have an encounter from the list below. Determine the result of the encounter by rolling 1d20:

| d20 | Encounter |
|-------|---|
| 1-3 | 2 Ogres |
| 4-8 | 1d4+1 Tent Town Citizens |
| 9-10 | Troll |
| 11-14 | One Tusk and Rufus (stats as in area 1-2) |
| 15-18 | 1d4+1 Dire Badgers |
| 19-20 | Ettin |

The following statistics are provided for easy reference.

Ogre: CR 3; Large giant; HD 4d8+11; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk greatclub +8 melee (2d8+7) or javelin +1 ranged (1d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA –; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Tent Town Citizen, Human Ftr2: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 2d10+4; hp 15; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk masterwork longsword +6 melee (1d8+2/19-20) or short bow +4 ranged (1d6/x3); SA –; SQ –; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Jump +2, Ride +5, Swim +4; Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (short bow).

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, masterwork longsword, short bow and 20 arrows, backpack, belt pouch (25 gp, 10 sp), explorer's outfit, hemp rope, waterskin.

Troll: CR 5; Large giant; HD 6d8+36; hp 63; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +14; Atk claw +9 melee (1d6+6); Full Atk 2 claws +9 melee (1d6+6) and bite +4 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Rend 2d6+9; SQ Darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6

Skills and Feats: Listen +5, Spot +6; Alertness, Iron Will, Track.

Dire Badger: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+15; hp 28; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk claw +4 melee (1d4+2); Full Atk 2 claws +4 melee (1d4+2) and bite -1 melee (1d6+1); SA Rage; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Listen +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Toughness, Track.

SA – Rage (Ex): A dire badger that takes damage in combat flies into a berserk rage on its next turn, clawing and biting madly until either it or its opponent is dead. It gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, and -2 AC. The creature cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Ettin: CR 6; Large giant; HD 10d8+20; hp 65; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +17; Atk morningstar +12 melee (2d6+6) or javelin +5 ranged (1d8+6); Full Atk 2 morningstars +12 melee (2d6+6) or 2 javelins +5 ranged (1d8+6); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA –; SQ Low-light vision, superior two-

weapon fighting; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Listen +10, Search +1, Spot +10; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack

SA – Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (Ex): An ettin fights with a morningstar or javelin in each hand. Because each of its two heads controls an arm, the ettin does not take a penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.

Areas of the Map

Area 2-1 – A Lizard with a Ladder (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A small stone cottage occupies a patch of land several dozen feet from the road. Long rough-cut logs are stacked against one of its walls. Near the lumber, several workbenches hold various tools of carpentry: saws, hammers, wood planes, sanding blocks, and an assortment of loose nails. A path from the cottage leads to a shack near the road. A sign over the wide window facing the road reads, "Ladders for Sale."

This is the home and place of business of Lazlo the lizardfolk carpenter, or Lazlo the Lizard. The reptilian carpenter has seized the opportunity to profit from attempts to rescue Rapunzel. Lazlo is friendly, and happy to sell one of his 25 ft. ladders to the PCs for 5 gp or an equally valuable item in trade. He knows nothing helpful about Rapunzel's Tower except that many adventurers have met an untimely end there, and others have fled from the Black Knight. One thing he *does* know is that if you want to get up to the tower window you need a good ladder.

Development: Lazlo wants no part in a fight with the PCs. If attacked, he flees into his cottage and locks and bars the door (2 inches thick, hardness 5, hp 20, Open Lock DC 25, Break DC 28). If cornered, he fights to the death if he can't make some kind of deal with the PCs.

Lazlo the Carpenter, Male Lizardfolk Exp5: CR 5; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+1 plus 5d8+5; hp 40; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk masterwork quarterstaff +6 melee (1d6+1) or light hammer +5 melee (1d4+1); SA –; SQ Hold breath; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5 (+7 carpentry-related items), Balance +7, Craft (carpentry) +8, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +2, Jump +8, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +2, Profession (merchant) +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +2, Swim +9; Alertness, Negotiator, Skill Focus (Craft [carpentry]).



Possessions: Light hammer, masterwork quarterstaff, *potion of cure light wounds* (CL 1st), pouch containing 25 gp and 2 sapphires each worth 100 gp, gold ring worth 250 gp.

Area 2-2 – Tower Marker: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The Eastern Road enters a stretch of rolling grassy hills with a scattering of trees and scrub. About a mile down the road a divergent path angles away from the main road into a large thicket. A nearby sign reads, “Rapunzel’s Tower” and points in the direction of the path.

Area 2-3 – The Black Knight (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A tall stone tower surrounded by thick briars and ivy vines that claw their way up its sides rises from a small clearing at the center of the thicket. The tower is approximately 40 ft. high with a peaked roof covered in overlapping slates. A narrow window some 25 ft. up appears to be the only entrance.

Before you have a chance to examine the structure, a man in black plate mail appears from the opposite side of the tower. He rides an ebony steed, likewise armored, and clenches a flail glowing with green, eldritch energy in one

gauntleted fists and a dark steel shield bearing a red crow in the other. He shouts, “Be gone from this place or suffer my wrath, miscreants!”

The self-proclaimed Black Knight originally came here, like many would-be heroes, to save the young maiden locked in the tower. He is under the affects of a *charm* spell, which compels him to “protect” Rapunzel. His mind has been poisoned into believing that anyone approaching the tower is a threat to her.

Tactics: The Black Knight charges the nearest PC using his Ride-By Attack and Spirited Charge feats. He circles, and then charges the next closest enemy, repeating this tactic as often as possible to inflict double damage with each attack. He is aware of the strangle briars and their locations, and avoids getting too close to them, but may try to lure the PCs into their reach. The Black Knight is fanatical in his duty, fighting to the death to “defend the Lady.”

Development: If the Black Knight is targeted by a *dispel magic* or *break enchantment* spell that succeeds on a DC 23 caster level check, it breaks the charm. He warns the PCs that the maiden in the tower is not what she seems. If the party is sorely lacking a strong fighter type in the group, he can make a good NPC, and helps them out until his debt is paid. Otherwise, he gallops away after waving his thanks, anxious to be gone from this accursed place.

Ad Hoc XP Award: If the PCs break the spell on the Black Knight rather than killing him, award XP as if they had defeated him in combat.

Black Knight, Male Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d10+8; hp 40; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +4, Grp +8; Atk/Full Atk +1 flail +10 melee (1d8+7); SA –; SQ –; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +5, Jump +2, Ride +9; Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (flail), Weapon Specialization (flail).

Possessions: +1 full plate, masterwork light steel shield, +1 flail, gauntlets of ogre power, warhorse.

Maelstrom, Heavy Warhorse: CR 2; Large animal; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 35 ft. (base 50 ft.); AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +3, Grp +11; Atk hoof +6 melee (1d6+4); Full Atk 2 hooves +6 melee (1d6+4) and bite +1 melee (1d4+2); SA –, SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +4, Spot +4; Endurance, Run.

Possessions: Masterwork full plate barding, military saddle.

Area 2-4 – Strangle Briers (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The thorny tangle of brier patches nestled against the tower are nearly 10 ft. thick at their base, but thinner where the vines climb the tower walls.

A PC approaching the vines on the western side of the tower may make a DC 20 Spot check to notice the door recessed in the tower's base, which is concealed by the thick, thorny vines. A second DC 20 Spot check allows the PC to recognize the briers as a threat. Of course, getting this close may have dire results before the danger is apparent.

These brier patches are sentient predator plants so closely related to assassin vines that only the difference in their appearance sets them apart. Many would-be rescuers fall victim to their crushing vines. Strangle briers use the same statistics as assassin vines. There are two patches hidden amongst the ordinary briers surrounding the tower.

Tactics: The strangle briers remain motionless until a target is within their reach or until the PCs attempt to harm them by hacking through with swords or axes. They use their *entangle* ability to animate the adjacent briers to help them capture opponents.

Treasure: The bones and rotting gear of many slain adventurers is buried under a shallow layer of soil around the roots of the strangle briers. Each successful DC 25 Search check through the dirt uncovers one of the following intact items of treasure: 5 rotting leather belt pouches (pouch #1 contains 300 gp; pouch #2 contains a small crystal apple worth 50 gp, 78 gp, and 30 sp; pouch #3 contains 10 pp, 33 sp, and a thunderstone; pouch #4 contains 3 onyxes worth 10 gp each and 25 sp; pouch #5 contains an unfinished love letter to someone named Lavendria, 5 gp, and 42 cp), 2 lengths of silk rope (50 ft.), 3 longswords, 1 masterwork dagger, and a mithral chain shirt.

Strangle Brier (2): CR 3; Large plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 30 each; Init +0; Spd 5 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with vine); SA Constrict 1d6+7, entangle, improved grab; SQ Blindsight 30 ft., camouflage, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant traits, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 9.

SA – Constrict (Ex): A strangle brier deals 1d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Entangle (Su): A strangle brier can animate plants within 30 ft. of itself as a free action (Ref DC 13 partial). The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to *entangle* (caster level 4th).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a strangle brier must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Area 2-5 – Rapunzel's Chambers (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A large canopy bed shrouded in a thin blue veil dominates this 20-ft.-square room. A tall window looks out to the west, affording a good view of the clearing below. Besides the bed, the room's furnishings consist of a tall vanity against the wall opposite the bed, a table with two matching chairs, and a tall armoire. A disturbing mix of jasmine and the stench of decomposition fills the chamber, the latter obviously coming from the bones and bloodstained, shredded clothing littering the floor.

Tactics: Neareatha calls for the PCs to climb up and rescue her. She does nothing while the PCs fight the Black Knight and the strangle briers. Once a PC climbs into the tower window she attempts to kiss him. The succubus continues to use her level-draining kiss if the targeted PC fails to save against her *suggestion* to accept more, or until she has drained her victim of all of his character levels or Hit Dice. She uses her *suggestion* spell-like ability on the next PC through the window, seductively telling the character that his companions must be eliminated.

Neareatha waits until the party is weakened from fighting each other, then assumes her true form and attacks any remaining PCs in her chamber with her claws. Neareatha cannot use her own summoning abilities since she is a summoned creature herself.

Treasure: The vanity contains several ivory and silver combs and brushes worth 300 gp for the set, a gold necklace with a single firedrop worth 200 gp, and several sets of earrings and rings worth a total of 480 gp. The brushes each have many strands of Neareatha's hair stuck in them.

Development: When Neareatha is slain, she simply vanishes, leaving a fading scream behind. However, until Neareatha has fulfilled her duty of

luring souls into the tower, death at the hands of the PCs is temporary. After 24 hours, she returns to life, still trapped in the tower, there to remain until work is complete. Neareatha is somewhat aware of this, as it has happened once before, though she does not fully understand it. If the PCs can persuade her to give up a lock of her hair in trade (DC 35 Diplomacy check), she is willing to do so for a *dismissal* spell. If the PCs have the means to cast the spell, by finding the *scroll of dismissal* in area 4-1 of Fester Boot for example, her freedom is short-lived. Without fulfilling her duties in Heroes' End she is forced back to the tower 24 hours later. Woe to the next adventurers that she encounters in this event.

If the PCs simply try to take a lock of hair by force, they may attempt to grapple Neareatha. If they pin her, they can pluck a single strand of hair from her head with each successful grapple check.

Ad Hoc XP Award: If the PCs gain Neareatha's lock of hair by diplomacy instead of combat, award them XP as if they had defeated her in combat.

Rapunzel (Neareatha), Polymorphed Succubus: CR 7; Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil); HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk claw +7 melee (1d6+1); Full Atk 2 claws +7 melee (1d6+1); SA Energy drain, spell-like abilities, *summon demon*; SQ Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 18, telepathy 100 ft., tongues; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 26.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +19, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +27 (+29 acting [both modifiers are while polymorphed]), Escape Artist +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +10, Intimidate

+19, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen +19, Move Silently +10, Search +12, Spot +19, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks), Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings); Dodge, Mobility, Persuasive.

SA – Energy Drain (Su): Neareatha drains energy from a mortal she lures into some act of passion, or by simply planting a kiss on the victim. If the target is not willing to be kissed, Neareatha must start a grapple, which provokes an attack of opportunity. Neareatha's kiss or embrace bestows one negative level. The kiss also has the effect of a *suggestion* spell, asking the victim to accept another kiss from the Neareatha. The victim must succeed on a DC 21 Will save to negate the effect of the *suggestion*. The DC is 21 for the Fortitude save to remove the negative level.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*charm monster* (DC 22), *detect good*, *detect thoughts* (DC 20), *ethereal jaunt* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *polymorph* (humanoid form only, no limit on duration), *suggestion* (DC 21), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only). Caster level 12th.

Summon Demon (Sp): Once per day Neareatha can attempt to summon 1 vrock with a 30% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

SQ – Tongues (Su): Neareatha has a permanent *tongues* ability (as the spell, caster level 12th).

Possessions: *cloak of resistance* +3 with silver fox head clasp worth 50 gp.

Spell Mishap

If a spell with a verbal component results in a random effect, roll d8 to determine the effect from the table below.

d8 Result

- 1-4 The caster is outlined in *faerie fire* (no save).
- 5 The spell fizzles in a noxious puff of smoke with the same effect as a *stinking cloud* centered on the spellcaster with a save DC equal to that of the intended spell.
- 6 A random spell is triggered. One of the caster's prepared or available spells of the same level affects the target (regardless of range and automatically hits) or is centered on the target if it is an area of effect. If there are no more available spells of that level, the caster is *dazed* for 1 round instead (no save).
- 7 The caster is rendered unconscious as the *sleep* spell (no save).
- 8 Arcane energy envelops the caster for 1 round, dealing 1d6 damage/level of the spell (no save).

Level 3: The Forest of Stolen Words

Several forests are scattered across the face of Heroes' End. However, The Forest of Stolen Words (better known as the Western Woods by the people of the tent town) bears an odd enchantment that sets it apart from the others. Spoken words are somehow stolen from the mouths of those that utter them while under its leafy boughs. This makes talking a tad difficult, as parts of conversations are simply stolen by the forest itself. Listen checks suffer a -4 penalty, and anything requiring a Concentration check has its DC increased by 2.

The forest's effect is particularly troublesome for spellcasters that attempt to cast spells or use spell completion items with verbal components, such as scrolls. In the Forest of Stolen Words these spells simply fail, but there is a 50% chance (1-10 on d20) that a random effect occurs instead (see the Spell Mishap sidebar). Single command word items such as wands and some wondrous items are not subject to this effect.

Wandering Monsters

There is a 20% chance (1-4 on d20) every hour spent in the Forest of Stolen Words that the PCs have an encounter with some of its denizens. Determine the result of the encounter by rolling 1d20:

| d20 | Encounter |
|-------|-------------------------|
| 1-4 | Giant Stag Beetle |
| 5-8 | Dire Boar |
| 9-10 | Giant Constrictor Snake |
| 11-14 | 8 Stirges |
| 15-18 | 2 Giant Wasps |
| 19-20 | Dire Bear |

The following statistics are provided for easy reference.

Giant Stag Beetle: CR 4; Large vermin; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +15; Atk/Full Atk bite +10 melee (4d6+9); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Trample 2d8+3; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 17, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 9.

SA – Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 19. The save DC is Strength-based.

Dire Boar: CR 4; Large animal; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +17; Atk/Full Atk gore +12 melee (1d8+12); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Ferocity; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Listen +8, Spot +8; Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will.

SA – Ferocity (Ex): A dire boar is such a tenacious

combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

Giant Constrictor Snake: CR 5; Huge animal; HD 11d8+14+3; hp 63; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +8; Grp +23; Atk/Full Atk bite +13 melee (1d8+10); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA Constrict 1d8+10, improved grab; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +17, Hide +10, Listen +9, Spot +9, Swim +16; Alertness, Endurance, Skill Focus (Hide), Toughness.

SA – Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a giant constrictor snake deals 1d8+10 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a giant constrictor snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Stirge: CR 1/2; Tiny magical beast; HD 1d10; hp 5; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -11 (+1 when attached); Atk/Full Atk touch +7 melee touch (attach); Space/Reach 2 ? ft./0 ft.; SA Attach, blood drain; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +14, Listen +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Attach (Ex): If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge is effectively grappling its prey. The stirge loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 12, but holds on with great tenacity. Stirges have a +12 racial bonus on grapple checks. An attached stirge can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached stirge through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the stirge.

Blood Drain (Ex): A stirge drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt 4 points of Constitution damage, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal. If its victim dies before the stirge's appetite has been sated, the stirge detaches and seeks a new target.

Giant Wasp: CR 3; Large vermin; HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk/Full Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Spot +9, Survival +1.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex.

Dire Bear: CR 7; Large animal; HD 12d8+51; hp 105; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +23; Atk claw +19 (2d4+10); Full Atk 2 claws +19 melee (2d4+10) and bite +13 melee (2d8+5); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Improved Grab; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 31, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +10; Alertness, Endurance, Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw).

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a dire bear must hit with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-1 – Cacophonous Whispers: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Stepping into the shadowy woods, the leaves stir in a breeze that carries disembodied whispers gibbering nonsensically in hundreds of different voices and languages.

This effect is more or less constant throughout the PCs' trek through the forest. On average, it should take the PCs about 3-4 hours to reach Fester Boot following footpaths with an occasional sign pointing them in the correct direction

Area 3-2 – Hunting Party (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A group of six dirty, disheveled children emerge from the woods ahead of you. As they step out onto the path, you can see that two of them are dragging a large, bloody boar using ropes tied around the dead carcass. Spotting your group, they suddenly lose interest in their kill and begin to close the distance between you.

As the small hunters get closer, it is obvious that they are halflings. This is a group of debased halfling warriors that were heading back to Fester Boot with their latest kill. Now that they've spotted the PCs, they ditch the dire boar in favor of sweeter meat...the adventurers.

Tactics: The debased halflings fire their crossbows then close for melee with their claws and bites. They attempt to surround the PCs.

Treasure: One of the halflings has a *necklace of fireballs* type V wadded up inside a dirty belt pouch along with some feathers and polished rocks. He

recently found the necklace in the woods, but has no idea that it is more than a pretty piece of jewelry.

Debased Halfling War1 (6): CR 2; Small humanoid (augmented halfling); HD 1d8+6; hp 12 each; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp +4; Atk claw +5 melee (1d3+3) or masterwork heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d8/19-20); Full Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d3+3) and bite +0 melee (1d4+1) or masterwork heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d8/19-20); SA Improved grab, rend 2d3+4; SQ Fast healing 5, halfling traits, low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Hide +7, Jump +0, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Swim +4; Improved Initiative, Toughness.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): If a debased halfling warrior hits an opponent of Small size or smaller with a claw attack, it deals normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it deals automatic rend damage. Debased creatures have a +4 circumstance bonus on all Grapple checks (already figured into the stat block).

Rend (Ex): If a debased halfling warrior hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. The attack automatically deals 2d3+4 points of damage.

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork heavy crossbow and 10 bolts.

Area 3-3 – Forest's Edge (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The path leads out of the forest down into a small hollow. At the forest's edge a grim collection of bony human and humanoid carcasses (elves, dwarves, and a gnome) have been tied to crossed posts like necrotic scarecrows. Dozens of crows perch on branches nearby, while others pick at the corpses with gore-stained beaks. Their beady, black eyes observe you dispassionately as you approach. A wooden sign further up the path reads, "We eat trespassers!"

There are a total of 2 crow swarms here. They are aggressive and jealous of their latest meal.

Tactics: The crow swarms attack any PCs that approach within 10 ft. of the corpses or otherwise meddle with their food.

Development: An examination of the corpses reveals that most of the flesh has been stripped from their bodies. A successful DC 15 Heal or Knowledge (nature) check allows the PCs to notice that, aside from what the crows have done to them



there are bite marks in the rotting flesh that appear to have been made by small humanoids (the debased halflings living down in the hollow in Fester Boot).

If combat ensues, the angry shrieks and caws of the crows alerts the residents of Fester Boot that trouble may be headed their way.

Crow Swarm (2): CR 2; Tiny animal (swarm); HD 4d8+3; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp —; Atk/Full Atk swarm (1d6); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA Distraction; SQ Half damage from slashing and piercing, low light vision; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature vulnerable to a crow swarm's damage that begins its turn with a swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Level 4: Fester Boot

*There was an old woman who lived in a shoe
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.
She gave them some broth without any bread,
Then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed.*

– Nursery rhyme

The colossal leather shoe known as Fester Boot is nestled in a hollow between the rocky foundations of the surrounding mountains and the Forest of Stolen Words. It and its residents are a twisted perversion of the nursery rhyme above. It boasts several windows, a tin chimney rising from a wooden shingled roof, and a stout door.

Fester Boot has numerous rooms spread out over three separate levels, with each level connected by stout wooden ladders. The rooms have no doors. Instead, a ragged curtain or tattered cloth hangs over the openings. The windows are simply holes cut in the thick leather boot and covered from the inside by dark, ragged cloth nailed over the openings. The front door was obviously not originally intended for the giant boot, and sits crookedly in its frame, but is quite sturdy nonetheless.

There are nearly a score of debased halflings that live here, though they're usually not all in residence at the same time. The halflings are kept in line by a vicious dwarven crone named Ma, who is far more cruel and bloodthirsty than her "children". Ma is the keeper of the second of two tokens required to open The Way Out Portal: the *iron shoe*. Its affects are already calculated in Ma's stat block. Also, see the Donning the Iron Shoe sidebar.

Exterior Walls: 6 in. thick; hardness 2; hp 30; Break DC 30; Climb DC 20.

Interior Walls: 1 in. thick; hardness 1; hp 5; Break DC 20; Climb DC 20.

Strong Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

Wandering Monsters

There are no wandering monsters in Fester Boot.

Areas of the Map – First Level

Area 4-1 – The Yard (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

An enormous leather boot covered in filth dominates a small hollow between the nearby woods and mountains. The sheer weight of the colossal boot has caused it to sink a few inch-

es into the loamy soil it rests on. A peaked roof of wooden shingles, many missing, covers the top of this odd structure, and a dilapidated picket fence surrounds its perimeter. The yard inside the sagging fence is strewn with junk – tattered backpacks, tools, belts, shredded clothing, rotting food, bones, and other bric-a-brac. There are several makeshift windows along the side of the boot and a heavy iron banded door that hangs awkwardly in its frame.

Unless the residents of Fester Boot are on alert, a pack of near feral mastiffs are picking through the refuse in the yard. These guard dogs are loyal and obedient to the debased halflings who breed them and train them to fight.

If Ma and the halflings are aware of trespassers entering the hollow, the dogs have already been called inside the boot. Once the PCs enter the yard, one of the halflings opens the door to let the dogs out with a shouted “Git ‘em!” In either case, the dogs viciously attack any trespassers.

Tactics: The mastiffs try to surround the PCs and knock them prone with their bite/trip attacks. The mastiffs focus their attacks on enemies knocked prone. A prone opponent suffers a -4 penalty to AC and attack rolls.

Treasure: A Search (DC 20) of the refuse littering the yard turns up several rotting coin pouches containing a total of 2 gp, 28 sp, and 127 cp, 3 thunderstones, a tanglefoot bag, a *scroll of dismissal* (CL 7th), and a *potion of cure serious wounds*.

Mastiff (5): CR 1; Medium animal; HD 2d8+4; hp 16; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk bite +3 melee (1d6+3); SA Trip; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Jump +8, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +3, Survival +1 (+5 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Track.

SA – Trip (Ex): A mastiff that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+2 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the mastiff.

Area 4-2 – Foyer (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The heavy outer door opens into a 20-ft.-by-20-ft. chamber that smells of dirty, wet leather and rotting refuse. The walls, floor, and ceiling are made of the same thick leather the enormous

shoe is made of. An open arch draped with a stained curtain that might have once been red is the only other exit from the room.

If Fester Boot's occupants are unaware of the PCs arrival to the hollow, several long wooden planks are laying on the ground side-by-side in the center portion of the floor covering the trap. If the halflings are ready for the PCs, they pull the planks into area 4-3 after setting the dogs loose.

The 10-ft.-by-10-ft. section of floor in the center of the foyer is a leather flap concealing a 40-ft. deep spiked pit trap. If 25 lbs. or more is applied to it, the flap collapses under the weight, dropping the object or creature into the pit beneath it. The leather flap springs back into place once the pressure is removed, automatically concealing the trap again. The bottom of the pit is earthen and bristles with broken swords, daggers, and sharpened stakes driven into the earth, with tips pointing up.

Treasure: A coil of rope under one of the skewered remains of past victims is actually a *rope of entanglement*. It appears in perfect condition, contrasting starkly with the decomposing gear around it.

Development: The bottom of the leather flap is hung with bells that jingle loudly when the trap is sprung. This alerts any residents in the adjacent rooms that there are uninvited bootguests.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 40-ft. deep (4d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes for 1d4+5 each); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20.

Area 4-3 – Lounge (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This long room is filled with mismatched, dirty furniture, including stools, chairs, a pair of couches, and a pair of tables. Vermin skitter along the ground at your approach, seeking the shadows and dark places under the furniture. A pair of arches covered with dark curtains provides the two other exits out of this room.

A group of 4 debased halflings are usually here lazing about, idly occupying themselves with snacks, games involving throwing knives, or bickering amongst themselves.

Tactics: If the debased halflings are on alert, they are armed with crossbows from area 4-6. They wait for the sound of the trap being sprung in area 4-2 and then throw aside the curtain separating two areas and begin making ranged attacks. Once the

PCs close with them, the halflings drop their crossbows and use their claw and bite attacks.

Treasure: A collection of 10 matching silver and gold throwing knives with decorative etching are piled on one of the tables. They are masterwork quality and use the same stats as daggers. The debased halflings use them for their knife-throwing games. The set is worth 3,270 gp.

Debased Halfling War1 (4): CR 2; Small humanoid (augmented halfling); HD 1d8+6; hp 12 each; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +1; Grp +4; Atk claw +5 melee (1d3+3) or masterwork heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d8/19-20); Full Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d3+3) and bite +0 melee (1d4+1) or masterwork heavy crossbow +6 ranged (1d8/19-20); SA Improved grab, rend 2d3+4; SQ Fast healing 5, halfling traits, low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Hide +7, Jump +0, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Swim +4; Improved Initiative, Toughness.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): If a debased halfling warrior hits an opponent of Small size or smaller with a claw attack, it deals normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it deals automatic rend damage. Debased creatures have a +4 circumstance bonus on all Grapple checks (already figured into the stat block).

Rend (Ex): If a debased halfling warrior hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. The attack automatically deals 2d3+4 points of damage.

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork heavy crossbow and 10 bolts.

Area 4-4 – Workshop: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Worktables rest against the far wall, one with a wooden stool in front of it, while a smaller table occupies a space along the wall near the archway leading in. Boxes and crates are piled haphazardly in the remaining space. Numerous tools and curious bits of metal, springs, cables, and polished wood cover the worktables. A partially built crossbow occupies the smaller table.

This is Ma's workshop. She can build almost any common weapon with the tools here, but the majority of the materials in the room are for building crossbows. A PC with Craft (weaponsmithing) may recognize that the tools are for weapon building. There are enough raw and salvaged materials here to craft 4 crossbows of any size or type and 100 crossbow bolts.

Treasure: The unfinished heavy crossbow is of masterwork quality. The weapon is worth 150 gp to a craftsman interested in finishing its construction. The tools are worth 55 gp.

Area 4-5 – Bedrooms:

These areas are all basically the same. They contain small unkempt beds, a variety of worthless keepsakes, and open footlockers containing stained – and for the most part dirty – clothes sized for halflings.

Area 4-6 – Weapon Room: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This room contains a wooden rack nailed to the wall. It holds several crossbows, but is obviously sized to hold many more. A small table under the rack is stacked with mismatched bolt cases and crossbow bolts loosely scattered across its surface. A spear is propped against the far wall next to a wooden chest.

Treasure: Six Small masterwork heavy crossbows hang from the rack. The table holds 10 full bolt cases and 16 loose bolts sized for the crossbows above them. If the debased halflings in area 4-3 are on alert, four of the crossbows and bolt cases and 4 of the loose bolts are missing from the table. The spear is nothing out of the ordinary. The chest contains 3 short swords, 2 longswords, a heavy mace, a cold iron spiked chain, and 2 longbows with quivers containing a total of 18 arrows. The weapons in the chest were looted from past kills. They are sized for Medium creatures.

Area 4-7 – Kitchen (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Several cabinets, tables, and shelves fill this large kitchen. Knives and cleavers stained from frequent use and infrequent cleanings are stuck into the wooden tabletop. A large sooty iron stove occupies a nearby corner. A wooden ladder leads up to the next level through a hole in the ceiling.

Ma can usually be found here. Two other archways exit the kitchen; one leads to a well-stocked larder, the other to an exit at the far end of the kitchen.

Ma is a sour, old dwarven crone with disheveled grey hair and patchy whiskers. She wears the *iron shoe* on her right foot and a clumpy leather boot on the other. She is aware of her endless role as guardian of the *iron shoe*, which keeps her in a foul, hostile mood. She stands in front of one of the tables chopping some meat for a stew she's working on. Even if Fester Boot is on alert she remains

here, supremely confident in her own combat prowess and the abilities of her debased halfling “children.”

Tactics: If the PCs make it this far, she growls, “You ain’t ‘a gittin’ the shoe, but I got somethin’ else ye can have,” and hefts her bloodstained cleaver. Ma then rages and wades into the midst of the PCs chopping with her cleaver. If any of the adventurers manage to damage her, she focuses her attacks on that opponent, attempting to kill him or cause him to flee, before returning her attention to the other PCs. She frequently taunts the PCs with how delicious they look and what great additions some “man meat” will make to her stew.

Development: This is a tough encounter that may take the PCs more than one attempt to overcome. Spells that ignore spell resistance are a good way to deal with Ma. Another good tactic is to grapple Ma and pin her. A successful disarm attempt can get the *iron shoe* from her foot (see the *PHB*, Chapter 8, Disarm and Grapple). For the purposes of disarm attempts, the shoe is considered a poorly secured item.

Ad Hoc XP Award: If the PCs defeat Ma, reward half again (+50%) as much XP for her CR.

Iron Shoe (Minor Artifact)

This powerful protective item resembles nothing more than an ordinary shoe of stout workmanship made of iron. It has no mate, but functions nevertheless when worn on the foot of any humanoid creature. However, it is keyed to the immediate vicinity of Fester Boot and only functions there.

The *iron shoe* provides its wearer with the following special qualities:

- Damage reduction 10/–
- +5 natural armor bonus
- Spell resistance 32

Strong abjuration; CL 20th; Weight 5 lbs.

Donning the Iron Shoe

Though the *iron shoe* may seem like a great treasure, it only functions in the hollow occupied by Fester Boot. While a PC may enjoy its benefits for a short time, once he leaves this area, it is simply a heavy shoe made of iron. Regardless, once it is used to power The Way Out Portal, the *iron shoe* returns to Fester Boot where it is once again donned by a rejuvenated, and even surlier Ma.

Ma, Debased Female Dwarf Bbn4: CR 6; Medium humanoid (augmented dwarf); HD 4d12+23; hp 55; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +4; Grp +13; Atk masterwork cleaver +10 melee (1d6+5) or claw +9 (1d4+5); Full Atk masterwork cleaver +10/+5 melee (1d6+5) and claw +4 melee (1d4+5) and bite +4 melee (1d6+2) or 2 claws +9 melee (1d4+5) and bite +4 melee (1d6+2); SA Improved grab, rage 2/day, rend 2d4+7; SQ Damage reduction 10/–, darkvision 60 ft., dwarf traits, fast healing 5, fast movement, illiteracy, low-light vision, spell resistance 32, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Appraise -1 (+1 weapons, +1 metal and stone items), Climb +7, Craft (weapon-smithing) +5, Jump +6, Listen +5, Spot +2, Survival +5; Cleave, Power Attack, Toughness.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): If Ma hits a Medium or smaller opponent with a claw attack, she deals normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If she gets a hold, she deals automatic rend damage. Debased creatures have a +4 circumstance bonus on all Grapple checks (already figured into her statistics block).

Rage (Ex): Twice per day, Ma may enter a fit of rage that lasts for 10 rounds. While raging, Ma has the following changes; hp 63; AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; Grp +15; Atk masterwork cleaver +12 melee (1d6+7) or claw +11 melee (1d4+7); Full Atk masterwork cleaver +12 melee (1d6+7) and claw +11 melee (1d4+3) and bite +6 melee (1d6+3) or 2 claws +11 melee (1d4+7) and bite +6 melee (1d6+3); SA Rend 2d4+10; Fort +11, Will +4; Climb +9, Jump +8.

Rend (Ex): If Ma hits with both claw attacks, she latches onto her opponent’s body and tears the flesh. The attack automatically deals 2d4+7 points of damage.

Possessions: +2 *breastplate*, masterwork cleaver, *iron shoe*, 4 *potions of cure serious wounds* (CL 5th), key to trunk in area 4-10, gold necklace set with sapphires worth 300 gp, pouch with 88 gp and 3 rubies each worth 100 gp, 3 gold rings worth 50 gp, 110 gp, and 200 gp.

Second Level

Area 4-8 – Trophy Room: Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Shelves on the walls hold a variety of curios: animal skulls, boar tusks, large fangs, porcupine quills, a long golden brown feather, and a large piece of what appears to be insect chitin. A pair of curtained arches lead to other rooms,

and a second ladder leads to a hole up to the next level.

Examination of the curios reveals that not all of the skulls are animals. There are several human, elf, and half-orc skulls as well. The large feather came from a griffon.

Area 4-9 – Upper Bedrooms: These sleeping chambers are identical to the ones at area 4-5.

Third Level

Area 4-10 – Ma's Bedroom (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This is the topmost room of this strange abode. A roof of sagging timbers and wooden shingles covers the boot 15 ft. above you. A large, squat bed rests against the far wall and mismatched furniture, including trunks, stools, chairs, an armor stand, chests of drawers, and a small table, round out the rest of this huge room's contents.

Ma's bedroom matches the rest of Fester Boot in the quality of its filth and clutter. A search turns up filthy clothing, vermin, a few odds and ends from the kitchen that have been misplaced here (a wooden spoon, measuring cup, salt shaker), and a bottle of nasty smelling green cream Ma uses on burns, abrasions, warts, and wrinkles. It doesn't help with any of those things, but she seems to think it does.

Unlike the other trunks and drawers, a black chest with iron banding is locked (Open DC 25). Ma has the key. If the key is turned incorrectly in the lock or an attempt is made to pick it, a pressure-sensitive trap is triggered after the lid is opened. A metal coil lining the inside of the lid snaps down like a mouse-trap as soon the object inside is disturbed.

Treasure: A +1 shock heavy crossbow and 2 cases of bolts are stored inside the trapped chest.

Development: The trap makes a loud "THWACK!" sound when it is sprung. If the PCs have not encountered Ma, she immediately rushes here to see who is trying to pilfer her prized possession. She arrives in 4 rounds.

If the PCs make off with Ma's crossbow they may be able to use it as a bargaining chip to get the *iron shoe* from her. Ma will do just about anything to get her favorite weapon back. She considers forfeiting the shoe a small price, and one she is willing to pay.

Metal Coil Trap: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 melee (2d4+4, metal coil); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

Level 5 (Optional): The Hinterlands of Heroes' End

There are many dangerous areas in Heroes' End that have not been detailed. Feel free to allow your PCs to explore these areas if they wish. See the Continuing Adventures in Heroes' End and Beyond section for a few suggestions.

Wandering Monsters

There are certainly many wandering monsters in the areas detailed below. Suggestions for what the PCs may encounter there have been provided below, however, it is up to you as the GM to come up with appropriate random encounters and fully flesh out the areas that follow.

Areas of the Map

Area 5-1 – The Mountains: The mountains of Heroes' End form a ring that hems in the rest of the demiplane on all sides. They are home to ogres, trolls, giant vermin, griffons, and gargoyles. And those are just the monsters that live on the surface! Who knows what horrors lurk in the dark places *under* the mountains?

Area 5-2 – Northern Woods: Most of the forests of Heroes' End are filled with normal woodland wildlife and a few dire animals. However, the Northern Woods are a dangerous place to traverse, being the home of a fiercely territorial company of girallons, which are fond of humanoid flesh. Luckily they do not pose a problem for those that avoid entering their woods, as the girallons prefer to stay in the forest.

Area 5-3 – Southern Woods: The Southern Woods are a dark and foreboding place filled with shadows, will-o'-wisps, and poisonous plants and oozes. A marshy quagmire at the center of the Southern Woods is home to a green hag whose cozy cottage always appears welcoming to those foolish enough to venture that far into the forest. She appears as a kindly old crone that never hesitates to invite travelers in for dinner. One of her favorite meals happens to be adventurers.

Area 5-4 – The Lizardfolk Village: Between the Southern Woods and the mountains bordering them is a small community of lizardfolk. They are peaceful and willing to trade with outsiders. However, the monsters that dwell in the mountains above them and the horrors lurking in the Southern Woods make visitors to their settlement few and far between.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs have obtained the 2 tokens to open a *gate* and return to their home plane, the adventure is essentially over. Of course, there is a chance that some of the characters do not make it through the portal before it closes. This may be from hesitation on their part, NPC interference, or a variety of other reasons. Gaining both tokens again is the only way to open another portal. The *guardian rejuvenation* quality of Heroes' End means that the PCs must face Neareatha and Ma all over again. While the PCs may have learned ways to better deal with them from their first encounters with the two token guardians, so too have Neareatha and Ma learned more effective ways to deal with the PCs. Their tactics will change to match what they remember of the PCs when they meet again.

In the event that some of the PCs are left behind in Heroes' End while their companions escaped, you can have your players generate new PCs to join the characters that got stuck there or even allow them to take over running Lord Riker, Sister Fairhand or Korrigan One-Tusk from the Tent Town of Failed Heroes.

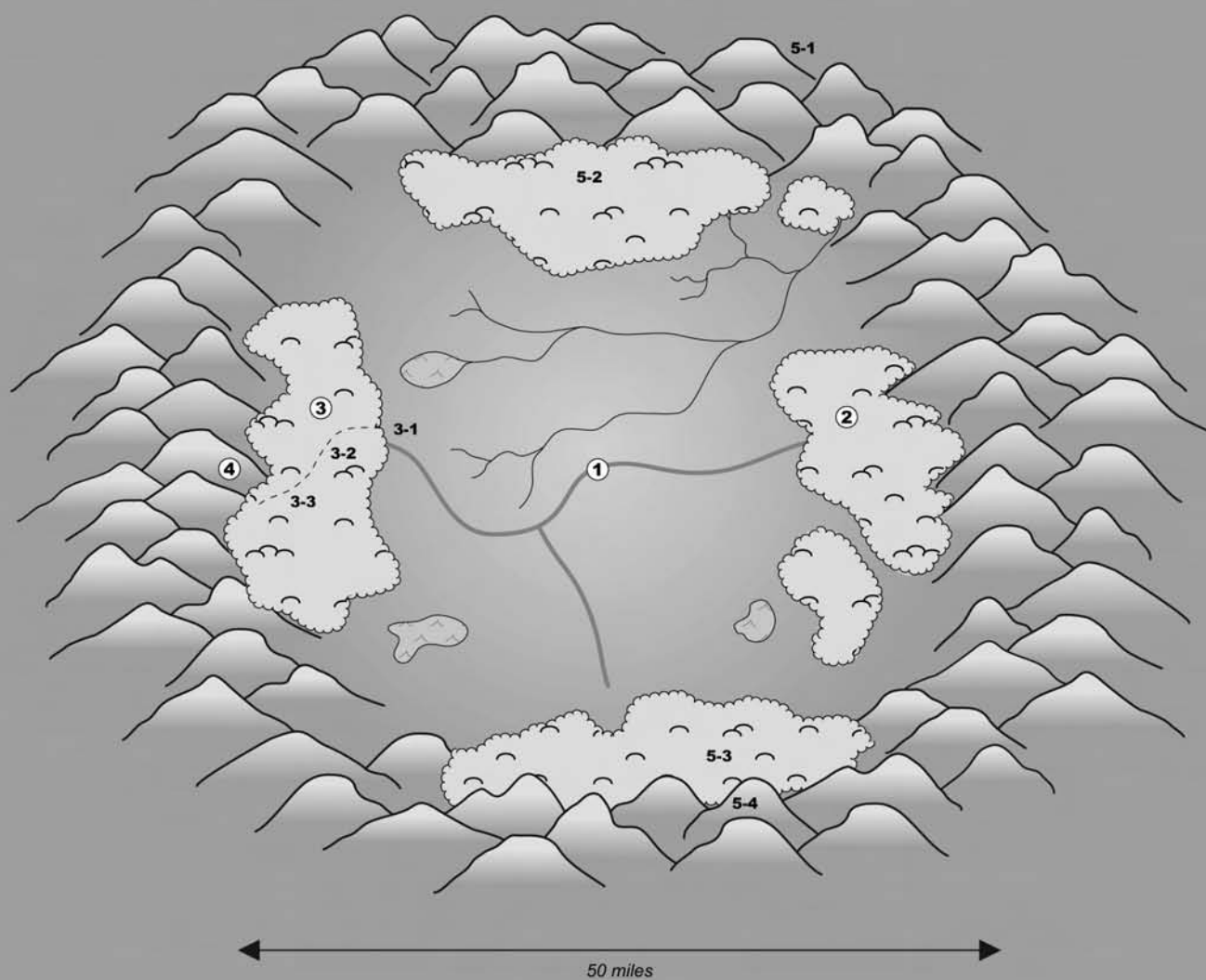
Continuing Adventures in Heroes' End and Beyond

The Hinterlands of Heroes' End section details numerous other adventure locales within this demiplane. If your players are enjoying their time in Heroes' End and would like to explore more of it, there is no reason you have to call it quits at The Way Out Portal. At your option, the *gate* may need more than just the tokens placed in their corresponding niches to activate it. Perhaps a command word must also be uttered. Rumors of a wise old crone living in the heart of the Southern Woods can lead the PCs on an adventure to the quagmire at its heart to bargain with the green hag for the command word. Maybe she knows it and maybe she doesn't. Perhaps the word can only be revealed through a special divination only she knows how to cast, but it requires special components that the adventurers must obtain: a fresh girallon heart, a vial of blood from a troll, and a griffon feather.

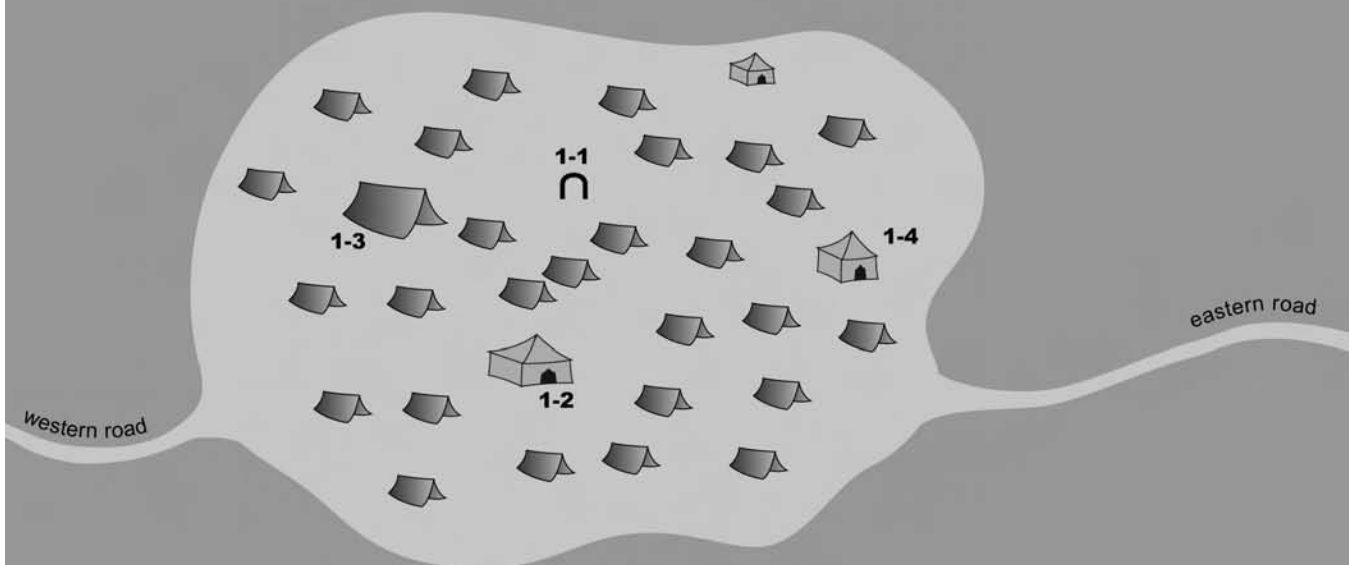
You can create additional tokens that are needed to power The Way Out Portal, such as a silver chalice nestled in a cluster of strangle briars in the Southern Woods. It lies among other treasure acquired by a string of will-o'-wisp that lurk there. The PCs may also have to obtain a battered iron crown worn by a grizzled ogre chieftain in his mountain stronghold.

If you plan to run DCC #38, "Escape from the Forest of Lanterns", instead of opening a portal back to the PCs' home world, you can instead open a shadowy *gate* to The Forest of Lanterns. Be sure you provide enough encounters and mini-adventures in Heroes' End to get the characters to the appropriate level before you send them on their way.

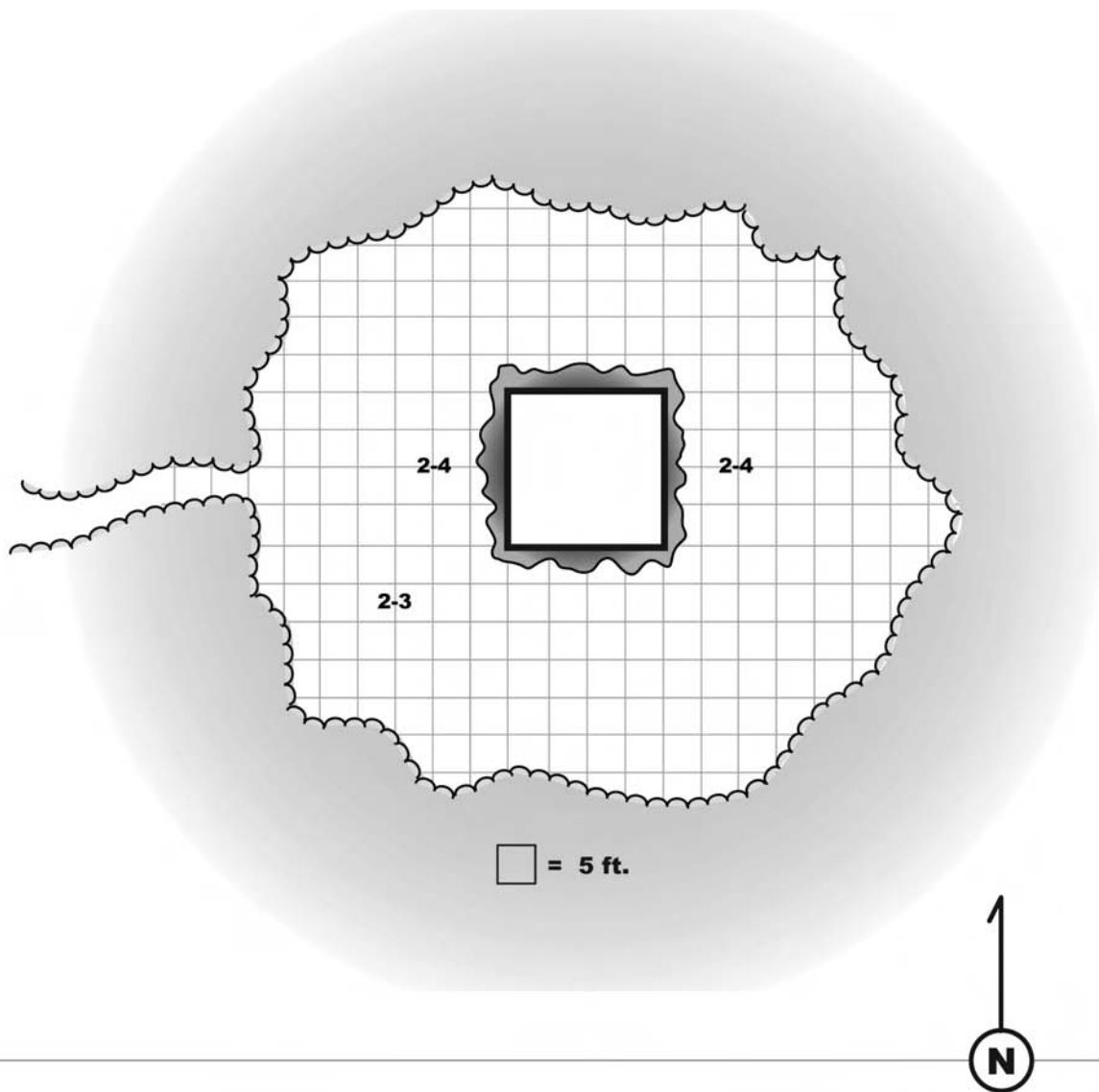
Heroes' End



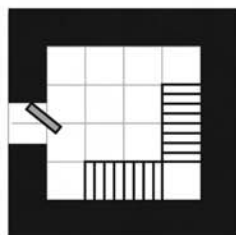
Level 1: The Tent Town of Failed Heroes



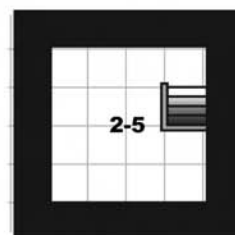
Level 2: Rapunzel's Tower



ground level

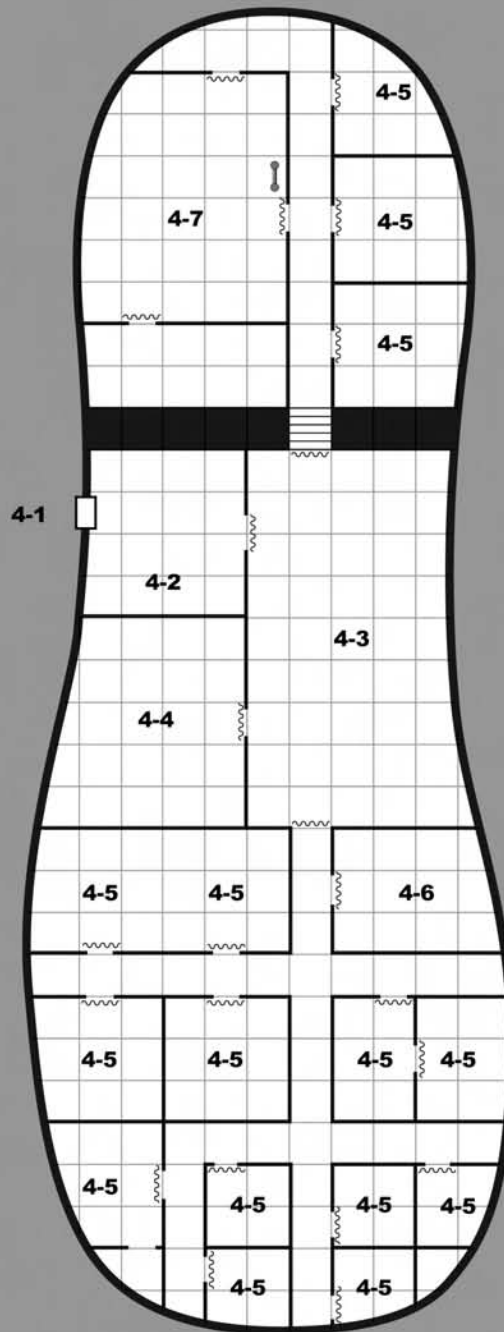


upper level



□ = 10 ft.

Level 4: Fester Boot



□ = 5 ft.



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Tide of Evil

By Eric Artis

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. *Dungeon Crawl Classics* feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Tide of Evil is designed for 4-6 characters of 4th level. Although any of the basic character classes can be used, paladins with their *aura of courage* and spellcasters with access to *remove fear* will do especially well. Also, as most of the dungeon is either partially- or fully-submerged, characters who prefer light armor will be more of an asset than their heavily-armored companions.

DMs should familiarize themselves with the swimming rules in the *Player's Handbook* and the aquatic terrain and underwater combat rules in the *DMG* before playing this adventure.

Adventure Summary

The village of Sandyshore, once prosperous, is being extorted by an increasingly demanding trio of sea hags that have moved into a nearby reef. The villagers, tired of giving their prized pearls to the sea hags, are ready to hire a group of adventurers to clear them out. The sea hags, however, are expecting trouble and are ready for it...

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|----|------|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1-1 | 56 | T | <i>Bestow curse</i> trap | 4 |
| 1-2 | 57 | C | Sea cat skeleton | 3 |
| 1-3 | 57 | C | 3 scrag skeletons | 6 |
| 1-4 | 58 | C | Merrow | 3 |
| 1-5 | 58 | C | 2 Medium shark zombies | 4 |
| 1-6 | 59 | C | <i>Grol</i> , male merrow Bbn2 | 5 |
| 1-7 | 60 | C | 2 merrows | 5 |
| 1-8 | 60 | C | Giant lobster | 4 |
| 1-9 | 61 | C | 3 sea hags | 7 |
| 1-10 | 62 | C | Aquatic mimic | 4 |
| 1-11 | 63 | C | <i>Neral</i> , lacedon Rog3 | 4 |

Scaling Information

Although Tide of Evil is designed for 4th level characters, it can be adjusted to accommodate smaller parties or parties of higher-level characters. Use the following guidelines to make the adjustments:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer characters): Change the *bestow curse* trap at the entrance to a *hail of needles* trap (DMG pg. 71); remove one merrow from each encounter and lower *Grol*'s barbarian levels by one.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or characters above 4th level): Make the *bestow curse* trap curse the victim with a -4 penalty to attack rolls, saves, ability checks, and skill checks until the curse is removed and couple it with a fusillade of spears trap; add a level or two of barbarian to each merrow; add 8 HD to the giant lobster, a level or two of sorcerer to each of the sea hags, and 8 HD to the aquatic mimic. For even more difficulty, have the hags summon a storm after the players defeat the scrag in area 3, making the water throughout the reef rough (Swim DC 15) and stormy in area 8 (Swim DC 25).

Getting the Players Involved

There are a number of ways to get the adventurers involved in the situation at Sandysore.

- The characters are traveling through Sandysore on their way to another destination and are hired by the village council. A secret meeting is held between the characters and the council to discuss the details of the mission.
- The PCs are traveling by ship and are caught in one

of the hags' displays of power. They are forced to make port in Sandysore where they learn of the hags and their extortion from the patrons of the Sordden Sailor.

- A merchant in a nearby town (but originally from Sandysore) knows of the plight of the villagers there and hires the PCs to help. He tells them to contact village council for more details.

No matter what hook is used, the council promises the party 2,000 gp in pearls and gives each character a *potion of water breathing* (10 hour duration) to use. Characters worried about their heavy armor are offered the use of a suit of studded leather (there are enough suits for everyone who wants one). The council can also provide tridents and spears for those who wish them.

Background Story

The village of Sandysore was once the envy of every fishing village for miles. Not only did they have an excess of fish in their waters and vast pearl-bearing oyster beds, they also had a sea cat living in a nearby coral reef that kept the waters around the village shark-free. But all that changed when a covey of sea hags and their merrow servants, recently chased out of their old home by a dragon turtle, decided the reef would be a perfect new home.

The hags and merrows made short work of the sea cat and, copying the Stormbringer clan of storm giants, began extorting protection money in the form of a share of the pearl harvest from the villagers. At first, the citizens of Sandysore resisted, but after a particularly nasty week of unabated storms and attacks by the merrow on any fisherman or diver braving the storms, the village agreed.

Month after month, the hags demanded more and more from the villagers until the people could no longer pay the extortion and still feed their families. Surreptitiously, the villagers have gathered together a small cache of *potions of water breathing* with the intention of hiring some adventurers to clear out the hags and their merrows.

But the hags have not been idle; they know that eventually the people of Sandysore will try to get rid of them. In preparation for an attack, the hags have bolstered their defenses by creating a number of undead guardians: skeletons from the corpses of the sea cat and a trio of scrag, and two zombies from a pair of sharks. Also, they have managed to forge an alliance with an aquatic mimic to watch over their treasures.

The Village of Sandysshore

Sandysshore (village): Conventional; AL LG; 200 gp limit; Assets 9250 gp; Population 925; Mixed (human 731, halfling 83, elf 46, dwarf 28, gnome 19, half-elf 9, half-orc 9).

Authority Figures: Geoff Broadblade (mayor, human male Ari2), Krackov (constable, male human Ftr2), Enialis (councilman, male elf Clr4 [Pelagia]), Elias Rootmonger (councilman, male gnome Wiz[Con]3), Jhaster Stoneshoulders (councilman, male dwarf Clr2/Wiz1).

Militia: Com1 (11), War1 (2). The militia for Sandysshore is smaller than normal to reflect the losses suffered from the initial merrow raids.

Notable Locations

Town Hall/Mayor's Residence/Jail: This immense two-story stone building is the largest in Sandysshore. The town hall, records office, and council chamber make up the first floor while living quarters and a private office for the mayor take up the second floor. A recently-built outbuilding (after the old one burned down from a lightning strike) houses the jail and constable's offices and quarters.

E & J's Ephemera: Two councilmen, Elias Rootmonger and Jhaster Stoneshoulders, own this small, bad-smelling (from the alchemical components) wooden building. An experienced conjurer, Elias always tries to talk customers into summoning scrolls "for that extra help everyone needs now and again" while Jhaster gives the customer exactly what they asked for, no more, no less. Here they sell many one-use items such as scrolls, potions and alchemical items. They keep a small stock of scrolls and potions (1d3 items of the requested potion or scroll, maximum 50 gp cost) and most alchemical items (except holy water and alchemist's fire). Anything costing more than 50 gp must be ordered and half the cost of the item paid in advance. Elias and Jhaster do all the work themselves, so most items will only take a day to make and are limited to their abilities (no 3rd level spell or above for scrolls or potions).

Sign of the Hook: Fron (male human Exp2), a friendly old salt, owns this large, one-story hardware store and small lumberyard for fishermen and pearl divers. Everything those professions use (sail cloth, lumber, rope, hooks, nets, tridents, knives, salt, etc.) can be bought here.

Fron is a bit addled and sometimes forgets what he was talking about (the result of being hit in the head by a mast boom) but is otherwise very friendly and often calls his customers by the names of dead relatives, not realizing he has done so.

The Sodden Sailor: A two-story tavern and inn catering to the fisherfolk, divers, and wharf workers. Vishan, a half-elf of aquatic elf parentage (Com1), runs this well-lit, friendly bar. He's taciturn and emotionless for an innkeeper but that has only endeared him to the locals, who refer to him as "Ol' Stoneface." An air of camaraderie normally pervades the atmosphere but it has become noticeably subdued of late. Meals and drinks are priced standard to the Player's Handbook. There are 6 private rooms upstairs (2 gp/day) or guests can "bunk out" in the common room (2 sp/day).

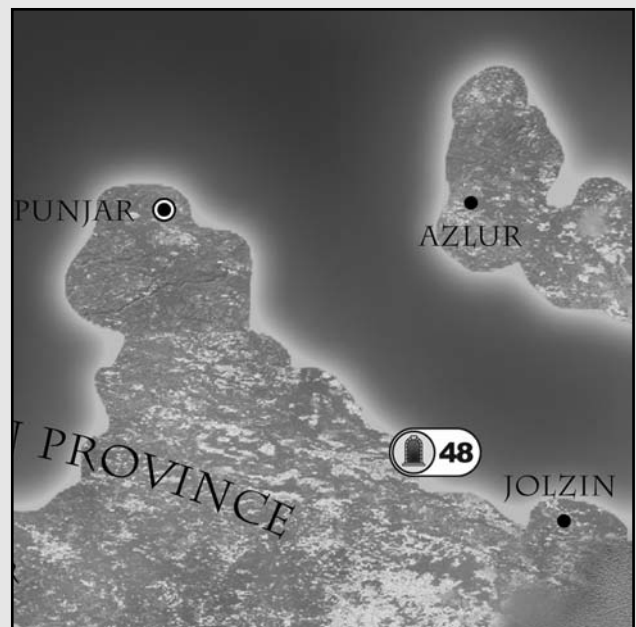
Temple of Pelagia: This one-story wooden building burned down several days ago after a particularly nasty storm and has yet to be rebuilt. Enialis holds his services and works out of the town hall for the time being.

Conditions within the Reef

The reef is made of dead coral with the top 15 feet always exposed. During the different tides, more or less of the reef becomes visible and the conditions within the reef change. The DM should ask the players at what tide they want to enter the reef caverns as that affects how the encounters play out. Make the following changes to each room as needed:

DCC World

The village of Sandysshore is renowned and envied for its rich fishing waters. A nearby coral reef is reported by locals to be home to a beneficent sea cat that patrols the waters, keeping them free of sharks. Though these tales are widely dismissed, there is no doubt that the surrounding waters are home to some of the finest pearl beds in the Southern Province.



Low Tide:

Areas 1-1 and 1-2 are dry. Only a few small pools of water lie scattered about.

Areas 1-3 through 1-7 are partially submerged (see below). Areas 1-8 through 1-10 are flooded.

High Tide:

Areas 1-1 and 1-2 are partially submerged. The rest of the caverns are flooded (see below).

Normal Tide: Areas 1-1 and 1-2 are almost dry (as low tide with slightly more water). Areas 1-3 through 1-7 are mostly flooded (treat as flooded but having the top 2 feet of each room filled with air). Areas 1-8 through 1-10 are flooded.

Note: Area 1-11 is always dry.

Partially Submerged: Area is filled with water to a depth of 4 feet. Medium or larger creature move at half speed or can swim (DC 10). Small and smaller creatures are forced to swim (or walk along the bottom if they meet the weight requirement in gear to do so). Medium and larger creatures gain cover while Small and smaller creatures gain improved cover (+8 AC and +4 Reflex saves). Medium and larger creatures can also gain this improved cover by crouching, but anyone benefiting from this improved cover suffers a -10 penalty on attacks against creatures that are not underwater. Lastly, all Move Silently DCs are increased by 2.

Being aquatic, the merrows must stay underwater to breathe. They stay below the waterline and are considered prone at the start of every encounter. They can stand up, but must hold their breath while doing so.

Flooded: Areas are completely submerged and creatures must either swim or walk along the bottom.

Walls: Thickness 3 ft.; Break DC 45; Hardness 7; 480 hp; Climb DC 15.

Floors: Uneven and rough; Balance DC 10 to run or charge.

All ceilings within the reef are 12 feet high, unless otherwise noted.

Variant Rule: Accelerated Swimming

With this variant rule, characters are allowed to swim faster (up to their full movement rate) as a full-round action if they succeed on a Swim check with a -5 penalty. Doing so is very strenuous, and uses up four rounds worth of their air.

Player Beginning

The hags' reef sits 300 feet offshore. The council loans the party the use of a rowboat to reach it and sees them off with wishes of good luck and better hunting. Read or paraphrase the following as the players set out:

The aftermath of the last storm in Sandysore lingers in a misty spray and five-foot swells, heaving one of the only seaworthy boats the villagers still possess. Looking back among the broken docks and shattered and sunken vessels, the village council and a few other citizens watch as you row your way to your destination: the coral reef lair of a covey of sea hags and their merrows.

A few hundred feet ahead, the black reef rises from the grey seas like a malignant tumor. You don't know what awaits you within, but if you are successful in your mission, the legend of your band will grow. Saving an entire village from such evil makes for a great song the bards will sing for years.

When the players reach the reef, they must climb up the reef wall to reach the entrance (Climb DC 15).

The Reef

Area 1-1 – Entrance (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

A yawning cave, ten feet wide and eight feet high, with a sloping tunnel burrows into the dead coral of the reef. Crude pictograms of large humanoids with tridents and nets terrorizing smaller humanoids are carved into the coral to decorate the edges of the opening. There is no light coming from below, but the stench of rotten fish wafts up from inside.

The merrows have carved drawings of themselves terrorizing the villagers of Sandysore. The large figures are shown overturning boats, knocking smaller figures into the water, and chasing the smaller figures underwater, all while a lightning storm rages overhead. The merrows have also hidden the password to bypass the *bestow curse* trap within the drawings since the hags got tired of telling them over and over so they would remember. A successful Search check (DC 15) discovers the phrase "I am a stupid ogre" in Giant carved into the coral.

The passageway burrows 20 feet into the reef before opening into area 2.

Trap: The hags have placed a *bestow curse* trap on the entrance to their lair and anyone crossing the threshold without first giving the password ("I am a stupid ogre" spoken in Giant) triggers it. Speaking the password deactivates the trap for one minute.

Victims suffer a -6 penalty to Strength until the curse is removed.

Bestow Curse Trap: CR 4; magic device; proximity trigger; no reset; password bypass (Search DC 20); spell effect (*bestow curse*, 5th level cleric, DC 14 Will save negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Area 1-2 – Sea Cat’s Cave (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Rotten fish and bones lie scattered about the floor of this chamber.

The merrow have thrown dozens of dead fish into this area and left them to rot, creating a miasma of foulness that affects anyone entering the room. Creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be sickened as long as they remain in the room.

Characters investigating the bones will find that although most of the bones are from various fish and other marine animals, there are also a large number of humanoid bones. A successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals that most of the humanoid bones bear the marks of large teeth, like those of a great cat.

Creature: The hags have animated the sea cat that once lived here into a skeleton and ordered it to attack any non-merrow that enters the cave. As a final touch, the hags covered the sea cat with a *veil* spell (Will disbelief DC 19) so that it appears as a living sea cat.

The sea cat lies in the southeast corner of the room, out of sight of anyone looking through the doorway (its Hide check is 8).

Tactics: The sea cat skeleton is a straightforward combatant and always goes for its closest opponent. It concentrates all of its attacks on that opponent until either that foe is killed or another opponent becomes the closest. It fights until destroyed.

Sea Cat Skeleton: CR 3; Large undead; HD 6d12; hp 39; Init +6; Spd 10 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+4); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d6+4) and bite +1 melee (1d8+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SQ Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 19, Dex 14, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Swim +12; Improved Initiative.

Treasure: A Search check (DC 20) among the bones and other detritus of this chamber reveals two items of interest: a small box and a scroll case (both waterproof). The box is not locked and holds

two potion vials (*elixirs of swimming*) nestled on a tiny velvet pillow. The scroll case contains two scrolls: *haste* (CL 5) and *knock* (CL 3).

Area 1-3 – Scrag Cave (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Although not as foul smelling as the previous chamber, this room still has a strong fish odor about it. Three large creatures squat against the far wall, facing the entryway. Their rubbery hide glistens with moisture, and their powerful arms end in sharp claws. A long, thin nose droops over their mouth.

A tunnel slopes downward out of this cavern to the northwest.

The sea hags use this chamber as a secondary guardroom. The usual merrow guard has been replaced by three animated, skeletal scrag.

The sloping passageway descends 20 feet before ending in area 4.

Creature: A trio of scrag skeletons has been posted here to watch the entrance to the deeper caverns. The hags have placed a *veil* spell (Will disbelief DC 19) on the scrag so they appear alive, hoping invaders waste spells on them. One of the trolls wears a torc carved from coral (see **Treasure**).

Tactics: The scrag skeletons attack as normal scrag do, flinging themselves at the nearest opponent without fear. As mindless undead, they fight until killed.

Scrag Skeletons (3): CR 3; Large undead (aquatic); HD 6d12; hp 39; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp +13; Atk Claw +8 melee (1d6+6); Full Atk 2 claws +8 melee (1d6+6) and bite +3 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 16, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Swim +14; Improved Initiative.

Treasure: Around the neck of one of the scrag skeletons is a coral torc (a C-shaped necklace) with a silver pearl at one end and a black pearl at the other (worth 900 gp total). The black pearl is the sea hags’ *hag eye*, radiating moderate divination if *detect magic* is cast upon it. The hags take turns peering through it at all times and will watch the PCs battling their undead minions, noting their strengths and weaknesses. They will not warn the merrows about any visitors but will make preparations themselves (see area 9 for details).



Area 1-4 – Common Area (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Crude tools, lobster pots, and crab traps, some still with tenants, are scattered about this chamber along the walls and floor. A ripped suit of hide armor drapes over some empty lobster pots.

Normally a common area for the merrows where they can socialize and perform their version of maintenance on their equipment, Grol (see area 6) has taken it upon himself to also make it another guardroom, a punishment for those merrow who displease him or the hags.

The tools here are typical craftsman's tools such as awls, hammers, and knives; items normally associated with primitive tool-makers, though badly fashioned. Their Large size, however, makes them usable as weapons. All the tools deal only 1d6 points of damage and suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls due to their ungainly balance.

About half of the pots and traps still have lobsters and crabs in them. The merrows have obviously been poaching the village's secondary food source.

Made from sharkskin, the hide armors are torn in several places and appear to be in the process of repair. The armor is Large size, obviously made for a merrow.

Creature: A single female merrow is stationed here (a punishment for fending off Grol's advances). She sits against the west wall fixing a suit of hide armor, but keeping her eyes on all three entrances to this chamber, taking her assignment seriously for fear of offending Grol again.

Tactics: The merrow will attack any non-merrow that enters, shouting a warning to the merrows in area 7 while doing so. She will first attempt to use her net to ensnare a fighter-type and focus her attack on them. If the room is flooded, she also uses her ink bladder (see Appendix) to create a barrier between herself and any spellcasters. If brought to below 10 hp, she retreats to area 7, gathers the merrows there, and returns.

Merrow: CR 3; Large giant (aquatic); HD 4d8+11; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk Trident +8 melee (2d6+5) or net +1 ranged touch (entangle); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2, Swim +10; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (net), Toughness.

Possessions: Large hide armor, Large trident, Large net, ink bladder.

Area 1-5 – Armory (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Large folded nets, massive tridents, and spare suits of sharkskin hide armor hang on pegs along the north, east, and west walls of this room. Like a kind of lord among weapons, an enormous heavy crossbow holds a place of honor, suspended on two pegs by itself on the south wall. Near the floor in the center, constantly circling, are two sharks.

The merrows use this cavern as storage for spare weapons and armor. There are 8 nets, 4 tridents, the heavy crossbow, and 2 suits of hide armor, all sized for a merrow. The weapons are made from coral, seaweed, and bone, and aside from their large size, are normal weapons. The heavy crossbow belongs to Grol. It is a masterwork crossbow, with the stock made from driftwood and the filed-down arms of a boat anchor as the crosspiece. A quiver of driftwood bolts hangs on a peg next to the crossbow. Grol's spare crossbow is worth 700 gp.

Creature: The sea hag's have animated two Medium sharks as zombies and placed them here as another layer of guards. They have also placed a *veil* spell on them (Will DC 19 disbelief) to make

them appear alive. The sharks constantly circle the center of the room until a non-merrow or non-hag enters, in which case, they attack.

Tactics: Being mindless undead, the sharks attack the nearest opponent and fight until destroyed.

Medium Shark Zombie: CR 2; Medium undead (aquatic); HD 6d12+3; hp 42; Init +1; Spd Swim 60 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk Bite +5 melee (1d6+3) or slam +5 melee (1d6+3); SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 13, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Swim +10; Toughness.

Area 1-6 – Chieftain's Cave (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Humanoid and other skulls hanging from pegs and seaweed ropes dominate the décor of this room. Shark jaws line one wall with a bizarre six-limbed turtle shell above them. Mounted on the far wall is a ship's wheel and placard. The placard reads: Red Queen. Underneath the wheel and placard lies a large pile of seaweed.

Grol, the leader of the merrows, makes his home here. He has decorated his chamber with trophies from his past. Skulls of elves, humans, dwarves, merfolk, and scrag make up most of the ornaments and an adult tojanida shell hangs above more than a dozen shark jaws of various sizes (mostly Medium but a few Large sharks as well). His pride and joy is the wheel and placard from a famous pirate ship, the Red Queen. The seaweed acts as Grol's bed but contains nothing of interest. He's cleverer than the other merrows and has hidden his treasure better.

Romana Winternight, daughter of an influential duke and once a famous paladin herself, fell from grace and became a pirate, eventually becoming captain of her own ship. The Red Queen, her captain (also known as the Red Queen for both her ferocity and flame-colored hair), and her crew were famous for their daring raids and their bloodthirsty demeanor. About ten years ago, after a particularly audacious raid where the pirates made off with several priceless holy relics, the ship and all her crew disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again. A DC 15 Knowledge check (local, nobility, or history) will reveal this information.

When Grol was still young, his tribe fell upon the Red Queen as it lay at anchor right after its last raid. They killed everyone aboard, scuttled the ship, and made off with the relics. When Grol heard about the

reputation of the ship and her crew, he went back and removed the wheel and placard from the wreckage as trophies. He often claims that he planned and carried out the attack that sank the famous ship, although he only aided in sinking it.

The passageway down to area 8 slopes down 30 feet over its length.

Creature: When not planning raids with the hags, ordering his followers about, or tormenting the local fishermen, the chieftain, Grol, can be found here. Grol takes everything about being a merrow to the extreme. Where most merrow are big, ugly, and greedy, Grol is even more so. Although not as lazy as his kin, he has an even worse temper and loves to torture captives for hours before throwing them to the giant lobster in area 8 (if he doesn't eat them alive himself, that is).

Tactics: Grol always rages before rushing into combat, choosing the biggest, toughest-looking target, hoping to add to his collection of trophies. As long as he rages, he will not retreat or surrender.

Grol, male merrow Bbn2: CR 5; Large giant (aquatic); HD 4d8+16 plus 2d12+8; hp 55; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +16; Atk/Full Atk Mwk trident +13 melee (2d6+7) or mwk heavy crossbow +5 ranged (2d8/19-20); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Rage 1/day; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, low-light vision, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 25, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +12; Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (trident).

SA – Rage (Ex): Once per day, Grol can enter a state of fierce rage that last for 9 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as he rages: AC 16 (touch 7, flat-footed 16); hp 67; Atk/Full Atk masterwork trident +15 melee (2d6+9); SV Fort +13, Will +3; Str 29, Con 22; Climb +10, Swim +14. At the end of his rage, Grol is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: Mwk Large scale mail, masterwork Large trident, masterwork Large heavy crossbow, 2 ink bladders.

Treasure: Grol has hollowed out three of the ship wheel's handles and hidden his share of pearls in them. A DC 20 Search check reveals that the handles detach and each holds 5 silver pearls (worth 100 gp each). One also holds a crude map drawn on manta ray skin showing the rough location of the wreckage of the Red Queen. The placard and wheel can be sold to a historian or collector of maritime history for 1,000 gp.

Area 1-7 – Merrow Lair (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Shark jaws and other trophies adorn the walls while three large piles of seaweed sit in the center of each wall to the north, west, and east. A few empty lobster pots are strewn about the floor.

The merrows use this cavern as their sleeping quarters. Each pile of seaweed acts as a bed and they keep their weapons stacked next to their beds. Most of the trophies are shark jaws but a few merfolk and even a scrag skull have their place on the wall.

Creature: Two merrows currently occupy this room. There is a 50% chance that they are sleeping; otherwise, they are loudly boasting to each other. Neither is wearing armor, but they keep their weapons within easy reach.

Tactics: The merrows throw their nets at the closest intruder, hoping to entangle and take them out of the fight for a while. If the merrow entangle a character, they ignore him and focus on the other party members. They use their ink bladders to create barriers like the merrow in area 4. If one merrow is killed, or either is brought to less than 10 hp, they attempt to flee the reef, never to return.

Merrows (2): CR 3; Large giant (aquatic); HD 4d8+11; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 30 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk Trident +8 melee (2d6+5) or net +1 ranged touch (entangle); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Listen +2, Spot +2, Swim +10; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (net), Toughness.

Possessions: Large hide armor, Large trident, Large net, ink bladder.

Treasure: The merrows keep their shares of treasure stashed in their seaweed beds (Search DC 20). Each bed has 3 silver pearls (worth 100 gp each) hidden within it. The merrows have made a habit of ransacking the others' beds looking for treasure while the others are gone. Since they're stealing from each other at every chance, when they do find a large number of pearls in another's bed, they assume that merrow is hoarding more than their fair share and the thieving merrow "redistributes" the wealth to its own bed.

Area 1-8 – Lobster Guardian (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This rough chamber's floor is covered with the bones of many marine animals. The water's current pushes and pulls at you, being much stronger here.

A strong current flows through this cavern, passing through very small tunnels in the walls. The current eddies and flows, forcing all swimmers to succeed on a DC 15 Swim check to make progress. Also, ranged weapons (but not spells) suffer a 20% miss chance from the strong, unpredictable currents. Tiny or smaller creatures must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be knocked against the closest wall, suffering 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per 10 feet of distance they traveled, and are stuck against that wall until they succeed on a Fortitude save. Small creatures walking on the floor and Medium swimmers must succeed on a similar Fortitude save or be knocked prone by the currents. Medium walkers move at quarter speed. Large or larger creatures are unaffected.

The bones in this chamber are a good representation of the local inhabitants. Fish, seals, sharks, dolphins, and even a merfolk or two have met their end here, captured or killed by the merrows to feed the hags' pet.

Creature: Trading some pearls and other treasures to a local tribe of sahuagin, the hags have acquired a giant lobster for their own private guardian. The lobster squats next to the west wall, awaiting its next meal. The lobster hasn't fed in a few days and is voracious.

Tactics: The lobster has been trained to be very aggressive against intruders. It charges the first creature to enter the chamber, attempting to grapple and crush that foe before attacking another. If it grabs an opponent, it immediately retreats to the west side of the cavern and constricts until its prey breaks free or dies. Unless faced with an opponent that is larger than itself, the lobster will fight until killed. Against larger foes, it retreats to the west side and fights defensively until killed or its opponent leaves.

As a Large creature, the giant lobster is unaffected by the currents here.

Giant Lobster: CR 4; Medium vermin (aquatic); HD 8d8+32; hp 72; Init -1; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk claw +10 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+5); Space/Reach 20 ft./5 ft.; SA Constrict 1d6+5, improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 16, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skill and Feats: Swim +13.

SA – Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a giant lobster deals 1d6+5 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a giant lobster must hit with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Treasure: Stuck against the ceiling (Search check DC 20) is a *bottle of air* a merfolk was bringing to Sandysore to trade for more useful items. Unfortunately, he was captured by the merrows and brought here to feed the lobster. The bottle slipped out of his satchel and floated up to the ceiling, becoming caught in a crevice.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: Due to the encounter conditions of this area, award +50% the normal xp.

Area 1-9 – Hags' Cave (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Enormous seaweed fronds and other marine plants reach 20 feet above you to the ceiling. The thick plant growth prevents you from seeing the far side of the cavern..

The sea hags use this cavern as their sleeping quarters and common area, and the ceiling here reaches 20 feet. The hags share a communal bed of seaweed in the northern alcove, and a map carved in the reef to the right shows the local area (with depths, reef formations, oyster beds and aquatic communities marked out). Ever since the party encountered the scraggs in area 1-3, the hags have cast *mirage arcana* (Will disbelief DC 18) to change the appearance of this chamber to the descriptive text. If the party has not alerted the hags, the cavern appears bare except for the seaweed bed and the map.

The secret door to area 11 (Search DC 20) sits high up on the cavern wall. The hags don't know about it, thinking that no one would build a secret door in a dead coral reef (they believe the sea cat was the only inhabitant).

Creature: All three hags are here, likely having been forewarned about the party by their *hag eye*. If they hear sounds of fighting or see light coming from the giant lobster's den, they get ready to use their spell-like abilities (see below). They start next to the far wall beside the wall map when the party arrives.

Tactics: Assuming the characters have done nothing to prevent them from being seen through the



hag eye, the hags are waiting for them near the wall map. With their *mirage arcana* ability in effect, they hide among the illusory plants (the heavy growth grants a +5 circumstance bonus to Hide checks). Unless a character succeeds on the Will save to disbelieve the illusion, they treat it as real, suffering a -5 circumstance penalty to Tumble and Move Silently checks and a 30% miss chance with their attacks (the hags suffer this miss chance with their evil eye ability if their target hasn't succeeded on the save). Running and charging are impossible and each 5 foot square requires 4 squares of movement to enter. Characters receive a new saving throw each time they interact with the illusion (moving, attacking, etc).

Because the hags move through the illusion easily, allow a character who sees the hags ignoring the mirage a new save to disbelieve. Those who succeed no longer see the plants and can ignore the penalties.

The hags' first action is to cast *polymorph* on one of their number, changing her into an orca whale. PCs who first see them must save against their horrific appearance (only one save is required). Opponents failing against a hag's appearance become targets of the *polymorphed* hag. The other two concentrate their evil eye attacks on fighters first, rogues next, then clerics, and finally, wizards. Dazed opponents or those brought to Strength 0 by the hags' horrific

appearance are ignored if there are still active foes. The hags continue to use their evil eye ability if they are not in melee. If there aren't any opponents subject to the hags' horrific appearance, the *polymorphed* hag attacks any spellcasters. Hags brought to less than 5 hp try to flee to the treasury (area 10) and hide behind the mimic there, hoping to draw the characters in so the mimic can attack them.

Sea Hags (3): CR 4; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +7; Atk Claw +7 melee (1d4+4); Full Atk 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+4); SA Covey spell-like abilities, horrific appearance, evil eye; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., amphibious, spell resistance 14; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trapmaking) +3, Hide +4, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +12; Alertness, Toughness.

SA – Horrific Appearance (Su): The sight of a sea hag is so revolting that anyone (other than another hag) who sets eyes upon one must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or instantly be weakened, taking 2d6 points of Strength damage. The damage cannot reduce a victim's Strength score below 0, but anyone reduced to Strength 0 is helpless. Creatures that are affected by this power or that successfully save against it cannot be affected again by the same hag's horrific appearance for 24 hours.

Evil Eye (Su): Three times per day, a sea hag can cast its dire gaze upon any single creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or be dazed for three days, although *remove curse* or *dispel evil* can restore sanity sooner. In addition, an affected creature must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or die from fright. Creatures with immunity to fear effects are not affected by the sea hag's evil eye.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day – *animate dead*, *bestow curse* (DC 17), *control weather*, *dream*, *forcecage*, *mind blank*, *mirage arcana* (DC 18), *polymorph*, *veil* (DC 19), *vision*. Caster level 9th. To use one of these abilities (which requires a full-round action), all three hags must be within 10 feet of one another, and all must participate.

Possessions: *Potion of cure light wounds*, 2 ink bladders.

Sea Hag (in orca form): CR 4; Huge monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 3d8+15; hp 28; Init +2; Spd Swim 50 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +19; Atk/Full Atk Bite +9 melee (2d6+12); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., amphibious, spell resistance 14; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 27, Dex 15, Con 21, Int

10, Wis 13, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trapmaking) +3, Hide -3, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +16; Alertness, Toughness.

Area 1-10 – Treasury (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

This room is bare except for two chests carved from coral, one large and one small. The small chest is up against the far wall, while the large chest sits to the south.

The hags keep their protection money here, but only the small chest actually contains valuables; the other chest is actually an aquatic cousin to the mimic.

Creature: The larger of the two chests is an aquatic mimic that the hags have employed to help guard their treasure. Because of its environment, it resembles a chest carved from the dead coral surrounding it.

Tactics: The mimic waits until a character gets close enough to attack before lashing out with its pseudopod and grappling its foe. Trapped in here and with its slow movement rate, the mimic realizes it cannot escape and fights until killed.

Aquatic Mimic: CR 4; Large aberration (aquatic, shapechanger); HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +1; Spd 10 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +13; Atk Slam +9 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk 2 slams +9 melee (1d8+4); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Adhesive, crush; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to acid, mimic shape; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Disguise +13, Listen +8, Spot +8, Swim +9; Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (slam).

Adhesive (Ex): A mimic exudes a thick slime that acts as a powerful adhesive, holding fast any creatures or items that touch it. An adhesive-covered mimic automatically grapples any creature that hits it with a slam attack. Opponents so grappled cannot get free while the mimic is alive without removing the adhesive first.

A weapon that strikes an adhesive-coated mimic is stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a DC 16 Reflex save. A successful DC 16 Strength check is needed to pry it off.

Unlike their underground cousins, air (not alcohol) dissolves the aquatic mimic's adhesive, but the mimic still can grapple normally. A mimic can dissolve its adhesive at will, and the substance breaks down 5 rounds after the creature dies.

Crush (Ex): A mimic deals 1d8+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Mimic Shape (Ex): A mimic can assume the general shape of any object that fills roughly 150

cubic feet (5 feet by 5 feet by 6 feet), such as a massive chest, a stout bed, or a wide door frame. The creature cannot substantially alter its size, though. A mimic's body is hard and had a rough texture, no matter what appearance it might present. Anyone who examines the mimic can detect the ruse with a successful Spot check opposed by the mimic's Disguise check. Of course, by this time it is far too late.

Treasure: The small chest contains a portion of the protection money the villagers of Sandysore have paid to the extortionists. The rest has been traded for weapons, food, guardians, and other essentials. It still holds a sizable number of silver pearls, exactly 32 (worth 100 gp each).

Area 1-11 – Old Smuggler's Den (EL 4): The secret door to this chamber is *arcane locked* (caster level 10). Once inside, read the following:

The bones of several creatures lie scattered across this room. Most are broken and appear gnawed on. A single, desiccated corpse dressed in studded leather armor, its face a rictus of pain, sits on the floor against the far wall, leaning on a large chest. Barrels and sacks are piled in the south corner.

Characters examining the bones find a mix of animal and humanoid bones. A DC 15 Heal check will identify the bones as three humans, two goblins, and two wolves; and all bear tooth and claw marks except for one of the humans whose bones also show the cuts of a weapon. All of the bones have been broken open and the marrow removed. The barrels once held water and wine, and the sacks were filled with cheeses, dried meats, and other foodstuffs, now empty, consumed long ago. The chest Neral leans against has a red hand print painted on the lid (Knowledge [local] DC 20 to identify this mark as belonging to the smuggling band, the Crimson Hand).

Creature: Neral, a lacedon, was trapped in here years ago by a malicious wizard who didn't appreciate being stolen from. Neral used to be loosely-affiliated with the Crimson Hand, a band of smugglers from Fair Haven. While his dealings with the Hand were fairly lucrative, Neral wanted more. He and his partner, Las, began skimming off the top of whatever shipments the Hand sent their way until they grew too greedy.

A load of magic items destined for a powerful wizard/assassin came into their possession and they decided to keep the entire cargo. Holing up in their reef hideaway, the two hoped the Hand and their employer would assume they skipped town with the loot and

search for them elsewhere, but they were wrong.

The wizard/assassin, not fully trusting a band of thieves, stashed an *amulet of inescapable location* in with the rest of his goods. His plan was that if the Hand kept his possessions for themselves, he could track them down no matter where they went. When his possessions were late, he cast powerful divinations to locate them. Tracing them to the reef near Sandysore, he entered and discovered the secret door with Neral and Las still inside. Not wanting to face an unknown number of rogues on their home turf, he *arcane locked* the door and left them to starve or die of thirst, planning to return and collect his things.

Discovering they were locked in and with hunger and thirst soon gnawing at their sanity, Neral and Las fell upon each other. After a vicious struggle, Neral won and ate his one-time companion; but that only sated his hunger for a while. Soon he called up the zombies from the necromancer's *robe of bones* and ate them as well. And still he was hungry.

When Neral finally died of thirst, he was cursed to return as a lacedon. When the party enters the room, he disguises himself as another corpse (a Spot check versus his Disguise check to see through the ruse), hoping someone will get close enough to him and the chest so he can attack.

Tactics: Neral will attack the first character to approach him and the chest. Crazy with hunger, he concentrates all his attacks on that individual. If he manages to kill or paralyze that person, he will start to eat them. Only if he is attacked by another will he stop his feasting and attack the rest of the party. Knowing he is cursed into this form and with nothing to lose, he will fight to the death.

Neral, male lacedon Rog3: CR 4; Medium undead (aquatic); HD 2d12 plus 3d6; hp 26; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk Bite +7 melee (1d6+2 plus paralysis); Full Atk Bite +7 melee (1d6+2 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +5 melee (1d3+1 plus paralysis); SA Ghoul fever (DC 12), paralysis (DC 12), sneak attack +2d6; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 19, Con –, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skill and Feats: Appraise +9, Bluff +6, Climb +9, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Hide +12, Intimidate +2, Jump +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Search +8, Spot +11, Survival +3 (+5 following tracks), Swim +10, Use Magic Device +5; Multiattack, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Ghoul Fever (Su): Disease – bite, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1 day, damage

1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex. An afflicted humanoid who dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is not under the control of any other ghouls, but it hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all respects. A humanoid of 4 Hit Dice or more rises as a ghast, not a ghoul.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a Neral's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.

Possessions: Mwk studded leather, short sword, *amulet of inescapable location*, key to treasure chest.

Treasure: Neral has managed to stash items helpful to his smuggling career, along with the magic items stolen from the Crimson Hand and his wizard employer. Inside the chest he was leaning against are a *robe of bones* (with only the skeletons left, Neral ate all the zombies), two doses of id moss poison in small vials, and two *feather tokens* (a *swan boat* and a *fan*).

Treasure Chest: Hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

Trap: Neral installed a poison needle trap on his treasure chest to keep out the unwanted. Anyone trying to pick the lock sets off the trap. The key he has will bypass the trap and open the chest.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; lock bypass (Open Lock DC 30); Atk +17 melee (1 plus poison, needle); poison (blue whinnis, DC 14 Fortitude save resists (poison only), 1 Con/Unconsciousness; Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 17.

Concluding the Adventure

The villagers of Sandysore treat the characters to a festival and start a holiday in their honor. The council rewards them with the agreed amount and offer to buy any items they have no use for. If the players bring the hags' wall map to the council's attention, they add another 500 gp worth of pearls to their reward and later invite a band of aquatic elves to move in to the reef in exchange for trade goods. Perhaps even asking the PCs to act as the village's emissaries to the elves.

A few weeks later, the next time the characters are at a tavern, they hear several requests for and a performance of "The Tide of Evil", a ballad about their exploits in this adventure complete with flattering descriptions of each character and their abilities, giving them an almost legendary quality.

New Alchemical Item: Ink Bladder

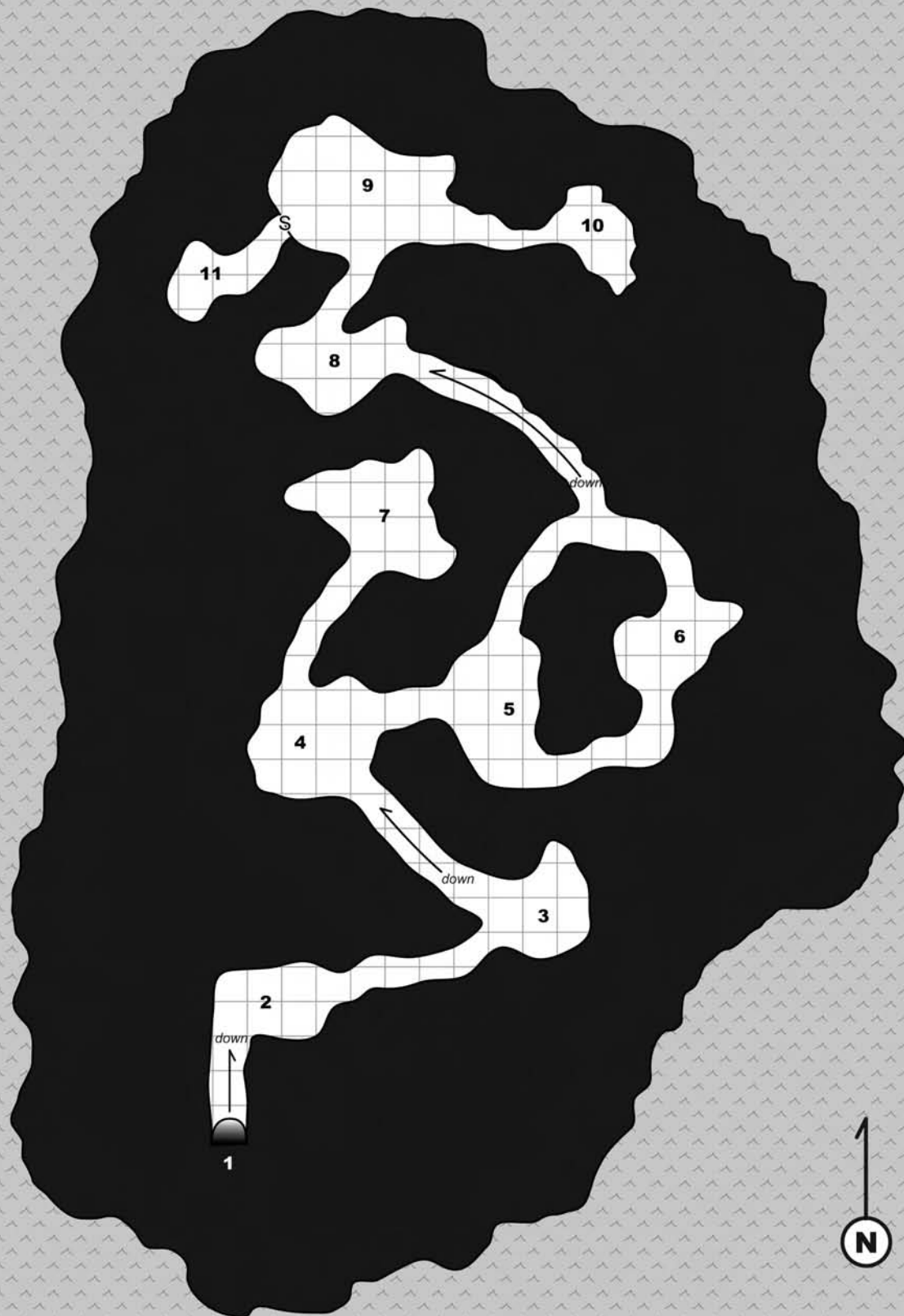
Made from the swimming bladder of a large fish, these items are filled with octopus or squid ink then stitched shut with strands of seaweed. When cut, smashed, or squeezed open, they release a thick cloud of ink filling a 10-foot cube. This cloud obscures all sight, even darkvision, beyond 5 feet. A creature within the cloud has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures on opposite sides of the cloud have total concealment to each other (50% miss chance, and the attacker can't use sight to locate the target).

The cloud persists for 1 minute in calm water, 4 rounds in rough water, and 1 round in stormy water.

Above water, the ink bladder can be thrown in an attempt to blind an opponent. The owner makes a ranged touch attack with a 10-foot range increment and, if he hits, his opponent must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Cost: 10 gp.

Tide of Evil



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Mistfall

By Mike Ferguson

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Mistfall is an adventure designed for four to six players of 4th through 6th level. While the player characters can be of any class, at least one rogue and one ranger character will be essential for good game play, and a druid character would certainly come in handy. The difficulty of play will be influenced a lot by how much the players characters pay attention to details and how they choose to deal with potential adversaries. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group's size, level, and unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

Located somewhere in the Amn'crith Forest is a giant tree known as the *Galada Stalkhit* – the Tree of Falling Mists. This enchanted tree acts as the magical source of many small rivers and streams in the region. In recent weeks, the flow of water from these streams has slowed and then virtually stopped. With several human and elven settlements villages facing grave peril from this bleak situation, the player characters travel deep into the heart of the Amn'crith to investigate the reasons for this mysterious occurrence, and to restore the waters of the Tree of Falling Mists to the region.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can

be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|-----|----|------|---|----|
| 1-1 | 70 | C | 2 maktar scouts War1 2 large monstrous spiders | 5 |
| 1-2 | 71 | C | 2 maktar scouts War1 Giant praying mantis | 4 |
| 1-3 | 71 | C | 4 maktar scouts War1 | 4 |
| 1-4 | 72 | T | <i>Fireball</i> trap | 5 |
| 2-1 | 72 | C | 2 maktar scouts War1 2 rift elf brigands Rgr1 | 4 |
| 2-2 | 73 | C | <i>Syadta Skarne</i> , elf Rgr3 Griffon | 5 |
| 3-1 | 74 | C | 2 rift elf brigands Rgr2 | 4 |
| 3-2 | 75 | C | <i>Ghalysar Tarm</i> , elf Rgr7 | 7 |
| 3-3 | 76 | C | 2 medium water elementals | 7 |
| | | T | 2 <i>burning hands</i> traps | |

Scaling Information

Mistfall is designed for four to six characters that are of 4th through 6th level, but it can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 4th level): Remove one of the Large monstrous spiders from area 1-1, and the giant praying mantis from area 1-2. Remove one of the maktar scouts from area 1-3. Remove the griffon from area 2-2. Remove 2 character levels from Ghalysar Tarm in area 3-2, and remove one of the Medium water elementals from area 3-3.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 6th level): Add an additional maktar warrior and Large monstrous spider to area 1-1, and an additional giant praying mantis to area 1-2. Double the number of maktar scouts in area 1-3. Double the number of rift elf brigands in area 2-1. Add 2 character levels to Syadta Skarne in area 2-2. Add an additional rift elf brigand to area 3-1. Add 2 character levels to Ghalysar Tarm in area 3-2, and add an additional Medium water elemental in area 3-3.

Getting the Players Involved

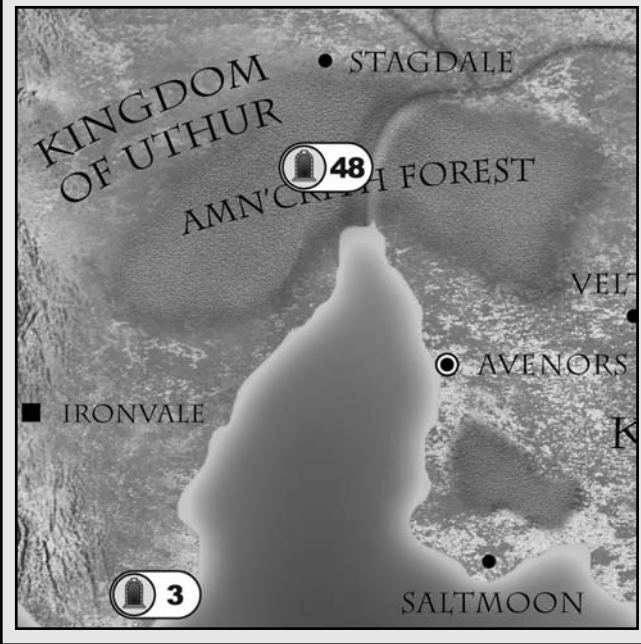
Feel free to use the following plot hooks to get the characters headed straight toward the dungeon.

The town of Stagdale, which stands within bowshot of the Amn'crith Forest, relies heavily on water from the small but powerful Eradake River for sustenance, and to move felled timber from the forest to the town. A little more than two weeks ago, however, the waters of the river mysteriously dried up, leaving the town in a state of crisis. The timber merchants of Stagdale hire the player characters to travel to the source of the Eradake River to determine the reasons for this odd occurrence, and to return the flowing waters of the river to the town.

Rumors abound that in the town of Stagdale, strange, mystical objects have been found that are causing strange and wondrous events. Although no one can produce these objects – or is willing to do so in public – it is believed that these objects are enchanted metal disks, roughly the size of a shield and covered in sinister glowing runes. Four of the disks are believed to have been found in the woods, and the appearance of the disks has coincided with the disappearance of the water from the Eradake River. Members of the Ordo Arcana hire the player characters to travel deep into the Amn'crith Forest in order to learn more about the origins of these rumored mystical metal disks.

DCC World

Legends tell that deep in the heart of the Amn'crith Forest is a giant tree known as the Galada Stalkhit – the Tree of Falling Mists. Stories of savage fae-kin – known commonly as rift elves – stalk the shadowed groves, deterring all but the most brazen fool.



Background Story

The Dawn of Elvenkind

In ancient times, when dragons still ruled over the realms of Áereth, strange gateways to other worlds sporadically opened and closed deep in the heart of the Amn'crith Forest. Legend speaks of a great pool of magical waters – the *Lóno Huinë*, or the Dark Pool of Gloom – which served as the source for these random, chaotic links to other planes of existence. Though no trace of this mystical pool can be found in the wilds of the Amn'crith anymore, it is known as fact that the elves of the Northlands once harnessed the waters of the *Lóno Huinë* as a source for their own sorcerous powers. Ancient elven wizards created many legendary artifacts in arcane rituals involving the waters of this mysterious pool, and to this day, certain elven spellcasters wear tiny vials of enchanted water around their necks – water said to have come from the *Lóno Huinë* itself.

For many years, the Amn'crith Forest served as one of the primary seats of elven power. Presumably, this was due to the power contained within the *Lóno Huinë*. However, due to its isolation, the forest was ill-equipped to handle the vast number of elves who journeyed to the Amn'crith in search of knowledge and enlightenment. To this end, a conclave of elven sorcerers created the *Galada Stalkhit* – the Tree of Falling Mists – in the center of the Amn'crith. This conclave placed a portal to the Elemental Plane of Water near the top of one of the tallest trees in the forests, transforming the imposing natural wonder into a mighty waterfall. A small river – the Eradake – flowed forth from the base of this now-magical tree, supplying the elven tribes in the region with an unending supply of fresh water.

Lost to the Ravages of Time

However, the glory of the Amn'crith Forest and its Dark Pool of Gloom was relatively short-lived. For reasons that remain unclear to this very day, most of the elves vanished from the seclusion of the Amn'crith shortly after the ancient War of Divine Right, leaving much of these mysterious woodlands to the flora and fauna of the forest. Only a few elves remained, but the few that did so became even more secluded and hermit-like, and effectively cut themselves off from the rest of the world.

Tales of the powerful magicks found within the forest still permeated the region, but tangible proof of the former might of the Amn'crith slowly vanished with each passing year. Only the strong, steady river waters flowing forth from the strange forest provided any hint of the sorcerous might and origins of this former elven stronghold.

The Forest Awakened

In more recent times, however, hints of the forest's former grandeur have come to the attention of humankind. Within the past one hundred years, two human towns – Ironvale and Stagdale – formed along the outskirts of the Amn'crith. Many timber merchants reside in these two towns, cutting down the great and rare Ashwood trees found in the Amn'crith, and exporting them for profit.

However, as the timber merchants moved deeper and deeper into the forest, they began to discover the legacies of the elves who once ruled over the Amn'crith. Human woodcutters working in the forest suddenly found themselves under attack from expert archers hidden in the trees. While no trace of these mysterious bowmen was ever found, the arrows are clearly the work of master elven craftsmen. Rumors abounded in Stagdale that woodcutters also began to find slim metal circular disks in the darker recesses of the forest. Though the purpose of these rune-covered disks remains unknown, it is believed that their origins are also elven in nature.

Most harrowing of all, though, was the disappearance of water from the Eradake River. As the rumors about the disks found in the Amn'crith Forest increased in Stagdale, the waters flowing from the Eradake slowed to a trickle ... and then disappeared altogether. The few scouts sent into the Amn'crith to investigate the vanishing waters of the river vanished themselves, leaving the town of Stagdale in a state of panic. Clearly, an ancient legacy of the elves had been awakened deep in the heart of the Amn'crith. Facing dire danger, it seemed that only the intervention of brave heroes could save Stagdale from certain doom...

Return of the Elves – GM's Eyes Only

For the most part, the elves that still live in the secluded regions of the Amn'crith Forest are good and gentle souls, content to remain in relative isolation far away from the rest of the world. However, a small band of elusive creatures known as rift elves have witnessed the actions of the human woodcutters...and decided that humankind's intrusion into the Amn'crith must come to an end. To accomplish this, they have re-activated some of the long-dormant enchanted devices found upon the Tree of Falling Mists. The rift elves plan to use the power of these devices to deprive Stagdale of its water, and to claim the power once wielded by their ancestors. They have already succeeded in the first part of their plan, and it will be up to the player characters to determine whether or not the rift elves succeed in the second part...

Player Beginning

As you travel along the dry, parched banks of the Eradake River, you see many signs that something sinister has befallen this ancient forest. Many trees along the riverbanks have been crudely hacked to pieces, black smoke from blazing fires can be seen far off in the distance...and, ever so often, you find the corpse of a human scout or woodcutter, cut down ruthlessly by dozens of arrows.

None of this somber death and destruction, however, prepares you for what you find when you finally reach the source of the Eradake River – the giant tree known as the Galada Stalkhit, or the Tree of Falling Mists. Crude wooden walls, somewhat hastily built, complete-

ly surround the base of the tree. Higher up, you can see an elaborate system of rope ladders and wooden platforms interlaced between the larger branches of the massive tree. A wooden gate, slightly open and apparently unguarded, appears to be the only way to get behind the walls and to reach the tree itself.

Someone has apparently decided to take control of the Tree of Falling Mists, and to defend it with force. If water is to return to the Eradake River – and if hope is to return to the town of Stagdale – it will be up to you to liberate the Tree of Falling Mists from these mysterious invaders...

Part 1: The Roots of Evil

Allies of the rift elves – elf-blooded savages known as the maktar – hurriedly built the fortifications surrounding the base of the Tree of Falling Mists. Though the rift elves abhor the savage brutality with which the maktar built these wooden walls, they are also practical enough creatures to recognize the immediate need for defending the Tree against a possible assault. However, they are none too pleased with the actions of their maktar allies – particularly the slash-and-burn tactics used to quickly cut down trees – and intend on dealing with such actions as soon as they believe the Tree of Falling Mists to be totally secured.

The fortifications at the base of the Tree are inhabited and defended solely by maktar scouts. The rift elves avoid the ground whenever possible, preferring to remain in the highest treetops of the forest. As such, the maktar more-or-less have free reign to do as they please in the lower fortifications...meaning that they attack in a far more savage and brutal manner than their rift elf masters would prefer. (They also lack the tactical cunning of the rift elves, which works to the advantage of the player characters.)

Player characters that choose to bypass the wooden maze of fortifications surrounding the Tree may potentially become targets for the maktar if they try to climb straight up the Tree to the wooden platforms above, ignoring the ladder in area 1-4 that leads to those platforms. Ascending the sheer surface of the tree is a daunting task – to do so requires a successful Climb check (DC 25). Additionally, while player characters climb the tree, they become visible targets for all creatures residing in this section of the dungeon, and the maktar will certainly move into position to make ranged attacks against all climbing PCs. The lower platforms

are also nearly 60 feet off of the ground, requiring a considerable number of successful Climb checks just to reach the platform (and several rounds of ranged attacks against the climbers!).

Unless otherwise noted, all passages are 10 feet high and 10 feet across. All walls and doors are made of wood. All passages are open and have no ceilings, allowing the player characters to climb over the walls if they are so inclined; however, by doing so, they may face certain challenges later on in the adventure – for starters, they may not find the key in area 1-4 necessary for successfully completing the adventure. The players may also find themselves missing certain clues and vital pieces of information that would aid them further along in the adventure.

All walls and doors, unless otherwise noted, have the following statistics:

Wooden Wall: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; 60 hp; Break DC 20; Climb DC 21.

Good Wooden Gate: 1-1/2 in. thick; hardness 5; 15 hp; Break DC 16 (stuck), 18 (locked).

Wandering Monsters

For every half hour that the PCs explore this level of the dungeon, there is a 10% chance (1-2 on d20) of a random encounter. This chance increases by 5% (1-3 on d20) if the player characters are making loud noises. If an encounter is called for, roll 1d6 and consult the following table.

| 1d6 | Encounter |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 1-3 | 1d4 maktar scouts War1 |
| 4-6 | 1d4 rift elf brigands Rgr1 |

The following statistics blocks are provided for easy reference for the GM.

Maktar scouts War1: CR 1; Small humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flatfooted 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Blink, low-light vision; AL LE; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Hide +7 (+9 in forested areas), Listen +2, Move Silently +3 (+6 in forested areas), Spot +2; Alertness.

SA – Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Possessions: Short sword, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, light wooden shield.

Rift elf brigands Rgr1: CR 1; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d8+1; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flatfooted 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8+3/19-20) or masterwork longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3); SA Favored enemy humans +2; SQ Low-light vision, rift elf traits, wild empathy +1; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Disguise +3, Handle Animal +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spot +10, Survival +6; Alertness, Track.

Possessions: Masterwork longbow, 20 arrows, longsword, studded leather armor.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Entrance to the Elven Stronghold (EL 5):

Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter this area:

This large, walled area still carries the scent off freshly-cut wood. Cobwebs lie lazily across many of the wooden planks that form the walls. Presumably, these webs come from the two gigantic spiders sitting in the northeast corner of this area. Sitting between the spiders are two smallish, elf-like creatures with long, gnarled hair, who seem to be arguing in a strange language and rolling crude dice.

This main entrance is the only gateway leading into the elven fortifications surrounding the Tree of Falling Mists. Believing this area to be the focal point of any possible attack, Ghalysar Tarm – the leader of the rift elf bandits and the maktar – ordered the maktar to defend the area with their strongest warriors and their spider mounts. However, as evidenced by the open gate and the maktars' wagering on games of dice, they believe the likelihood of attack to be virtually nonexistent.

The presence of the player characters, however, immediately refocuses their attention on defending the Tree of Falling Mists.

Scattered on the ground near the entrance to area 1-2 are several sets of dice carved from animal bones, and approximately 200 gp.

Tactics: The maktar scouts leap onto the backs of their spider "mounts"; however, as soon as their spider companions come within 20 feet of the player characters, they *blink* to a more rearward position and attack the party with their longbows, preferring to let the spiders engage in melee combat. When possible, the maktar continue to *blink* in order to avoid melee, although if seriously threatened by the player characters, they attempt to withdraw to area 1-2 for assistance.

The monstrous spiders attempt to pin down and trap the player characters with their ability to throw webs. Once one or more player characters are effectively entangled by the webs, the spiders attack entangled opponents with their poisonous bites. The spiders fight to the death.

Maktar scouts War1 (2): CR 1; Small humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 7, 9; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flatfooted 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Blink, low-light vision; AL LE; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Hide +7 (+9 in forested areas), Listen +1, Move Silently +3 (+5 in forested areas), Ride +5, Spot +1; Alertness.

SA – Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Possessions: Short sword, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, light wooden shield.

Monstrous Spiders, Large (2): CR 2; Large vermin; HD 4d8+4; hp 23, 26; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp +9; Atk/Full Atk bite +4 melee (1d8+3 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison, web; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +3, Jump +2, Spot +4.

SA – Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Str.

Web (Ex): Web-spinning spiders can throw a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size category larger than

the spider. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 13) or burst it with a Strength check (DC 17).

Web-spinners often create sheets of sticky webbing from 5 to 60 feet square, depending on the size of the spider. They usually position these sheets to snare flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed on a DC 20 Spot check to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot section has 12 hit points, and sheet webs have damage reduction 5/-. A monstrous spider can move across its own web at its climb speed and can pinpoint the location of any creature touching its web.

Area 1-2 – The Lair of the Mantis (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter this area, you are greeted by the sight of yet another large insect – this time, a giant praying mantis, which hisses and clacks its claws together when it spies you. Flanking the mantis are two more small elf-like creatures, who grin cruelly as they raise their shortbows in your direction.

Prior to the arrival of the rift elves and their maktar allies, this area beneath the Tree of Falling Mists had been used for many years as a nesting area by a giant praying mantis. Unable to drive away the mantis from the Tree – Ghalysar Tarm provided strict orders that the giant insect was not to be harmed – the maktar instead chose to confine the creature in a makeshift pen while building their fortifications around the base of the Tree. Over the past several days, though, the mantis grew somewhat accustomed to the presence of the maktar, allowing them into its new “pen” without provoking a hostile reaction.

Tactics: The praying mantis, which is incredibly territorial, immediately charges the player characters in order to drive them out of the area. Should the party retreat, the praying mantis ceases its attacks the moment they are out of the area. If the player characters do not leave the area, the mantis fights to the death.

However, the maktar scouts use their *blink* abilities to hound the player characters with ranged attacks, using their shortbows. Depending on how the player characters enter this area, the maktar either move to block the wooden corridors leading into this area – thereby cutting off any retreat from the area – or sim-

ply flank the entrances to the area, making any sort of escape difficult. Should the praying mantis be killed, the maktar scouts retreat to area 1-3 for help.

Maktar scouts War1 (2): CR 1; Small humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 7, 7; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flatfooted 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Blink, low-light vision; AL LE; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Hide +7 (+9 in forested areas), Listen +2, Move Silently +3 (+6 in forested areas), Spot +2; Alertness.

SA – Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Possessions: Short sword, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, light wooden shield.

Giant Praying Mantis: CR 3; Large vermin; HD 4d8+8; hp 28; Init -1; Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (poor); AC 14, touch 8, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk claws +6 melee (1d8+4); Full Atk claws +6 melee (1d8+4) and bite +1 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 19, Dex 8, Con 15, Int -, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide -1 (+11 when surrounded by foliage), Spot +6.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a giant praying mantis must hit with its claws attack. If it wins the ensuing grapple check, it establishes a hold and makes a bite attack as a primary attack (at its full +6 attack bonus).

Area 1-3 – The Bandit Camp (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The ashes of a fire still smolder in the center of this walled area. Piles of barrels and crates line the northern wall. A dozen or so dirty bedrolls lie along the southern wall, making it clear that a significant military force has made its home in these fortifications.

This area is the primary encampment for the majority of the maktar/rift elf forces. The crates and barrels contain mostly mundane supplies such as water, dried meats, blankets, and the like – there is little in the way of luxury to be found in this area. A careful Search check (DC 18) of the bedrolls lined up against the southern wall, however, reveals a small leather pouch containing 3 large emeralds, each worth 900 gp.

Tactics: As in the other areas of this part of the adventure, the maktar want no part of melee combat with the stronger player characters. They use their *blink* abilities to their best advantage, trying to

position themselves so that they can catch the player characters in a crossfire of arrows. If seriously threatened by the party, they attempt to make a strategic withdrawal to area 1-4 in order to regroup; once there, however, they become resigned to their fate and fight to the death.

Maktar scouts War1 (4): CR 1; Small humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5, 6, 8, 9; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flatfooted 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Blink, low-light vision; AL LE; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Hide +7 (+9 in forested areas), Listen +2, Move Silently +3 (+6 in forested areas), Spot +2; Alertness.

SA – Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Possessions: Short sword, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, light wooden shield.

Area 1-4 – Buried in Fire (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This walled area is long, narrow, and apparently empty. At the far end of this area, a sturdy rope ladder winds its way up into the branches of the Tree of Falling Mists to a wooden platform high above. Apart from a sharpening wheel and a few chipped swords located near the entryway to this area, there appears to be little else of interest in this place.

Although seemingly empty, this area contains one very valuable item – one of the silver enchanted keys needed to re-activate the portal to the Elemental Plane of Water located in area 3-3. The key is buried near the base of the rope ladder leading to area 2-1 – a successful Search or Spot check (DC 20) reveals the pile of fresh dirt covering a buried wooden chest.

Though unlocked, the chest is protected with a *fireball* trap – unwary adventurers that just fling open the lid to the unlocked chest may face a fiery surprise. Once open, though, the player characters find the enchanted key (worth 250 gp), as well as a pile of 1,100 gp.

The rope ladder leading upward is quite sturdy and secure – ascending the ladder only requires a successful Climb check (DC 10). It leads 60 feet up to area 2-1.

Fireball Trap: CR 5; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*fireball*, 8th-level wizard, 8d6 fire, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Part 2: The Platforms in the Sky – Lower Level

The rope ladder from area 1-4 leads to the lower platforms encircling the Tree of Falling Mists. Built long ago by the elves that inhabited the Tree, these platforms have largely remained unused for several centuries.

The open wooden platforms surrounding the Tree of Falling Mists are little more than long, level wooden floors built among the highest branches of the trees. Combat or any other actions taken on an open platform may alert the inhabitants of all other open platforms to the presence of the player characters. However, the chance of detection is relatively low, given that the thick density of tree branches between the platforms makes the other platforms somewhat difficult to see, and the constant flow of forest noise tends to drown out the sounds of combat. Sighting activity on other open platforms is extremely difficult (Spot DC 30), and any attempt to use a ranged attack on a creature standing on a different open platform is equally difficult (-12 penalty to all ranged attacks.)

The rope bridges that connect the platforms can only safely be crossed at half speed. Crossing the bridge requires a successful Balance check (DC 10). Failure by 4 or more indicates a slip, but the falling character can attempt a Reflex save (DC 15) to grab onto the bridge and avoid falling. Characters attempting to move at full speed must make a successful Balance check (DC 22); should this check be failed, no Reflex save is allowed to avoid falling. Falling from a bridge or platform causes 6d6 points of falling damage, as it is 60 feet from the platforms to the ground. A PC on the rope bridge is considered flat-footed for combat purposes. Player characters that fall from the platforms may attempt to climb back up the Tree of Falling Mists (Climb DC 25) or just use the rope ladder again in area 1-4.

Rope Bridge: 1 in. thick; hardness –; hp 2; Break DC 23.

Wooden Walls/Platform: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; 60 hp; Break DC 20, Climb DC 21.

There are no wandering monsters or random encounters in this area of the adventure.

Areas of the Map

Area 2-1 – Let the Arrows Fly (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter this area:

This wooden platform, which measures nearly 60 feet long and 40 feet wide, is home to four other smaller platforms. Each of these smaller



platforms measures 10 feet square, and are located in the four corners of the larger platform. Small wooden ladders lead up to the smaller platforms, which appear to be perfect for observation scouts, or for master archers.

However, standing below one of the platforms are two more small elf-like creatures. They chuckle menacingly as they draw their swords and start heading in your direction.

This particular platform was used eons ago as an observation post by elven rangers. The maktar scouts and rift elf bandits that have taken control of the Tree of Falling Mists have returned the abandoned platform to this purpose, and have been using the platform to track potential intruders trying to ascend the Tree of Falling Mists. Unlike the maktar in area 1-1, though, the rift elves in this area have been fully alerted to the party's presence, and have positioned themselves to defend their post.

The archers' platforms are only 10 feet above the main platform in this area. Player character seeking to reach the tops of these platforms must make a successful Climb check (DC 15). However, lying in wait in the northeast and southeast platforms are rift elf rangers – one ranger in each platform. They make a Hide check as soon as the party enters this area; player characters must make a successful

opposed Spot check to detect them. Should the player characters fail their Spot check, the rift elf rangers gain a surprise attack.

Tactics: The maktar act as "bait," trying to draw the player characters into melee range. The reason for this is quite simple – they are hoping that their rift elf allies have successfully hidden themselves, and will be able to surprise the party with a flurry of unexpected arrows.

Maktar scouts War1 (2): CR 1; Small humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5, 8; Init +1; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flatfooted 12; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3); SQ Blink, low-light vision; AL LE; Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Hide +7 (+9 in forested areas), Listen +1, Move Silently +3 (+5 in forested areas), Ride +5, Spot +1; Alertness.

SA – Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Possessions: Short sword, composite shortbow, 20 arrows, light wooden shield.

Rift elf brigands Rgr1 (2): CR 1; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flatfooted 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8+3/19-20) or masterwork longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3); SA Favored enemy humans +2; SQ Low-light vision, rift elf traits, wild empathy +1; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Disguise +3, Handle Animal +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spot +10, Survival +6; Alertness, Track.

Possessions: Masterwork longbow, 20 arrows, longsword, studded leather armor.

Area 2-2 – Wings of the Messenger (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

Part of this large, long wooden platform appears to be fenced off, much like a pen for a warhorse. However, it is clear that the pen is for no ordinary creature – for standing in the middle of the pen is a massive monstrosity, possessing a lion-like body with feathered wings and an eagle's head. Sitting astride this creature is a long-haired female elven warrior, clad in studded leather and brandishing a longsword.

Next to the pen is a ladder crafted from stout rope, which leads up to another set of wooden platforms higher in the Tree of Falling Mists.

The elf ranger riding on the back of the griffon is Syadta Skarne, an accomplished warrior and loyal follower of Ghalysar Tarm. Her primary task is to deliver messages between Tarm and the other rift elf tribes located deep within the Amn'crith Forest, and to keep an eye out for possible intruders while flying high above the treetops. Evidently, she missed the impending arrival of the player character during her most recent aerial adventures – and she intends to immediately rectify the matter with her steel.

The wall of the wooden pen is short (only 5 feet in height), and fairly flimsy.

Wooden Pen Wall: 3 in. thick, hardness 3, 30 hp, Break DC 16, Climb DC 14.

Tactics: Skarne immediately takes flight on her griffon steed, harrying the party with attacks from her bow. Every other round, she swoops down at the party, letting the griffon take its pouncing attack against any opponent she deems to be a significant threat to her and the other rift elves. If her mount is slain, she attempts to leap back onto the platform (which may or may not be possible, depending on her tactical position at the time) and engage the player characters in melee combat.

Fanatically loyal to Ghalysar Tarm, Skarne fights to the death if allowed to do so. However, if subdued and captured by the player characters, she may be coerced to provide information about the hidden key in area 1-4, and Tarm's presence in area 3-2. (At the GM's discretion, the player characters can "discover" an enchanted silver key in Skarne's possession if they did not discover the key in area 1-4. This key, of course, would be identical to the key described in area 1-4).

Syadta Skarne, female rift elf Rgr3: CR 3; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 3d8+3; hp 20; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+3/19-20) or masterwork longbow +7 ranged (1d8+1/x3); Full Atk masterwork longsword +7 melee (1d8+3/19-20) or masterwork longbow +5/+5 ranged (1d8+1/x3); SA Favored enemy humans +2; SQ Low-light vision, rift elfen traits, wild empathy +4; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Disguise +3, Handle Animal +4, Hide +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Ride +5, Search +5, Spot +8, Survival +6; Endurance, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Rapid Shot, Track.

Possessions: Masterwork longsword, masterwork longbow, 20 +1 arrows, masterwork studded leather armor.

Griffon: CR 4; Large magical beast; HD 7d10+21; hp 54; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +15; Atk bite +11 melee (2d6+4); Full Atk bite +11 melee (2d6+4) and 2 claws +8 melee (1d4+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Pounce, rake 1d6+2; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Jump +8, Listen +6, Spot +10; Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

SA – Pounce (Ex): If a griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +8 melee, damage 1d6+2.

Part 3: The Platforms in the Sky – Upper Level

The rope ladder from area 2-2 leads to the upper platforms surrounding the Tree of Falling Mists. Much like the lower platforms, these upper platforms have largely remained unused for several centuries.

Unless otherwise noted, movement and combat on the wooden platforms and rope bridges in this section of the dungeon are identical to those covered in Part 2: The Platforms in the Sky – Lower Level. The only significant difference is that falling from a bridge or platform causes 10d6 points of falling damage, as it is 100 feet from the platforms to the ground.

Rope Bridge: 1 in. thick; hardness –; hp 2; Break DC 23.

Wooden Walls/Platform: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; 60 hp; Break DC 20, Climb DC 21.

There are no wandering monsters or random encounters in this area of the adventure.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-1 – A Slippery Slope to Danger (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

This immense wooden platform measures nearly 90 feet long and 50 feet wide. The wooden boards that comprise the platform seem sturdy and slick. Spaced evenly throughout the floor of the platform are six circular holes, which drop into the blackness far below.

At the far end of the platform is another rope bridge, which leads into a maze of tree branches. Standing guard over the entrance to this bridge are two arrogant elven warriors, armed with longbows and quivers of arrows.

The outer edges surrounding this open platform are sloped slightly downward and extremely slick. Additionally, there are six holes in the platform, each circular and measuring 5 feet in diameter, spaced evenly across the platform floor. Like the outer edges of the platform, the edges of these holes are slick and sloped downward.

Any creature within 5 feet of the platform edge or one of these six holes that takes a full action must make a successful Balance check (DC 15) or slip off the edge of the platform, falling 100 feet to the ground below and taking 10d6 points of falling damage. Due to the vast number of tree branches that can help ease the impact of the fall, any falling creature that makes a successful Tumble check (DC 15) only takes half damage from the fall.

Tactics: The rift elf brigands on this platform are fully aware of the platform's slippery edges, and seek to use them to their advantage. They attempt to pin down the player characters with ranged attacks from their longbows, forcing the characters to charge past the slippery holes in the platform if they wish to engage in melee combat. If engaged in melee, the brigands hold their ground at what is probably the safest part of this particular platform. Not wishing to fail their master Ghalysar Tarm, they fight to the death.

Rift elf brigands Rgr2 (2): CR 2; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 2d8+2; hp 13, 15; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flatfooted 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk masterwork longsword +6 (1d8+3/19-20) or masterwork longbow +7 (1d8/x3); SA Favored enemy humans +2; SQ Low-light vision, rift elven traits, wild empathy +3; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Disguise +3, Handle Animal +3, Hide +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +7, Search +5, Spot +9, Survival +5; Alertness, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Possessions: Masterwork longbow; 20 arrows; masterwork longsword; masterwork studded leather armor.

Area 3-2 – A Revolutionary Elf (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

This wooden platform is somewhat smaller than the others that you have found, measure only 40 feet long and 40 feet wide. Its edges are surrounded by dark, forbidding tree branches. To the west, a small pathway appears to lead from the platform directly inside the tree, which appears to glow with a cool, blue light.

Ghalysar Tarm is the mastermind behind the plot to cut off the water supply to Stagdale. Xenophobic

and mistrustful of mankind, Tarm grew tired of the timber merchants' increasing activity in the Amn'crith Forest, and decided that the time had come to reclaim the might and power once wielded by elves in ancient times.

To this end, Tarm decided to take control of the Tree of Falling Mists. This was partly to deprive Stagdale of its precious water and to drive away the humans. However, there was a distinct secondary purpose to this plan – to reclaim the ancient secrets of traveling between dimensions. By shutting down the portal to the Elemental Plane of Water, ancient objects known as glyph disks were reactivated and imbued once more with sorcerous powers. By placing the disks in an enchanted gateway, they allow the user of the disk to travel to faraway lands, worlds, or planes of existence. While Tarm has not yet discovered the specific locations of such gateways, he has accumulated a small number of disks, and knows enough legends and tales of the gateways to believe that their discovery is imminent. Once he finds a gateway, he plans to use it to unleash unspeakable horrors against the humans and dwarves of the Northlands, and to completely isolate the Amn'crith from the rest of the Known Realms. Much of this plan is sheer folly, and possibly even madness, but given that Tarm is utterly mad, this is perhaps to be expected.

Around Tarm's neck hangs a small silver key. This is the second key required to activate the portal in area 3-3 leading to the Elemental Plane of Water. At the GM's discretion, Tarm's belt pouch may also contain maps to potential locations of planar gateways that can be opened with the glyph disks, if the GM intends to create related follow-up adventures to this particular adventure. Also, at the GM's option, one of Tarm's possessions is an enchanted glyph-covered disk – if the GM plans on using these mysterious disks in further adventures, it is recommended that this be included amongst his possessions. (And if the GM does not intend to use the disks in subsequent adventures, it is recommended that the disk be substituted for an ordinary diamond worth 200 gp.)

Tactics: Unless the player characters approach this particular platform by unconventional means (i.e., via a fly spell, or by climbing the side of the tree to reach the platform) or unless they take active measures to make a stealthy approach onto the platform, Ghalysar Tarm is fully aware of the party's presence, and makes a Hide check to conceal himself in the shadows near the entrance leading inside the Tree of Falling Mists. Player characters must make a successful opposed Spot check to detect Tarm's presence; should they fail, the powerful rift elf

ranger gains a surprise attack against the party.

Regardless of whether or not the party successfully detects him, Tarm's battle tactics remain the same – he charges the closest opponents and uses his +1 *longsword* and *dagger of venom* in melee. If possible, he attacks elven opponents first, then human (his two favored enemies). He may use his *entangle* spell to immobilize tougher opponents. Crazy and confident in his eventual triumph, he fights to the death.

Ghalysar Tarm, male rift elf Rgr7: CR 7; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 7d8+7; hp 42; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 15, flatfooted 18; Base Atk +7; Grp +12; Atk +1 *longsword* +13 melee (1d8+6/19-20) or +1 *dagger of venom* +13 melee (1d4+6 plus poison/19–20) or +1 *longbow* +12 (1d8+1/x3); Full Atk +1 *longsword* +11/+6 melee (1d8+6/19-20) and +1 *dagger of venom* +11/+6 melee (1d4+3 plus poison/19–20) or +1 *longbow* +12/+7 (1d8+1/x3); SA Favored enemy elves +4, favored enemy humans +2; SQ Low-light vision, rift elven traits, wild empathy +8, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Concentration +5, Handle Animal +10, Heal +8, Hide +14, Jump +10, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +14, Ride +14, Search +12, Spot +12, Survival +8, Swim +8, Use Rope +8; Alertness, Animal Affinity, Blind-Fight, Endurance, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2; save DC 11 + spell level): 1st – *entangle*, *jump*.

Possessions: +1 *longbow*, 20 arrows, +1 *longsword*, +1 *dagger of venom*, +1 *studded leather armor*, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *ring of protection* +1, rune covered enchanted disk (worth 200 gp).

Area 3-3 – The Heart of Falling Mists (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter the Tree of Falling Mists, you realize that you have truly found an enchanted place. You walk along a path formed from the wooden interior of the Tree – and this path is surrounded by a massive circular pool of water! The path, which measures 10 feet wide, extends out nearly 100 feet towards a wooden dais in the center of this strange, water-filled pool. A small object stands upon the dais, but from this distance, it is difficult to determine what the object might be.

As you begin to walk along the wooden path, you hear a faint rumbling noise. Ominous shapes begin to form in the water – angry humanoid shapes that do not appear pleased by your presence...



Entering this area immediately activates a *summoning* spell, which automatically brings 2 Medium-sized water elementals into the pool of water. These two creatures attack the party immediately.

The pool of water contained within the Tree of Falling Mists is deceptively deep. Though the water within 10 feet of the wooden path and dais leading into the area is only 3 feet deep, the water gets much deeper beyond that point – every other part of the pool in this area is 40 feet deep. Creatures of Small size or less must make a Swim check (DC 10) if they enter the waters immediately surrounding the wooden path and dais; creatures of Huge size or smaller must make a Swim check (DC 12) if entering the deeper parts of the pool of water. It is recommended that the GM should be familiar with the underwater combat rules as presented in the DMG (in the Wilderness Adventures section of Chapter 3: Adventures). The ceiling in this area is 20 feet, and the “walls” are treated as magically treated wooden walls.

Magically Treated Wooden Walls: 6 in. thick; hardness 10; 20 hp; Break DC 40, Climb DC 21.

Tactics: One of the water elementals immediately charges the party and attacks fiercely with its slam attacks; the other remains out of melee combat for a round or two, judging where the player characters

are positioning themselves in combat. If any player characters wander into the shallow waters bordering the wooden path, the second water elemental unleashes its vortex attack against such foolhardy individuals; otherwise, it joins with its companion in assaulting the party with slam attacks. Both elementals fight until banished or destroyed.

Water Elementals, Medium (2): CR 3; Medium elemental (water, extraplanar); HD 4d8+12; hp 29, 35; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 90 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk slam +6 melee (1d8+4); SA Water mastery, drench, vortex; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., elemental traits; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Listen +3, Spot +4; Cleave, Power Attack.

SA – Water Mastery (Ex): A water elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its opponent are touching water. If the opponent or the elemental is touching the ground, the elemental takes a -4 penalty on attack and damage rolls. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.)

Drench (Ex): The elemental's touch puts out torches, campfires, exposed lanterns, and other open flames of nonmagical origin if these are of Large size or smaller. The creature can dispel magical fire it touches as *dispel magic* (caster level 4th).

Vortex (Su): The elemental can transform itself into a whirlpool once every 10 minutes, provided it is underwater, and remain in that form for up to 2 rounds. In vortex form, the elemental can move through the water or along the bottom at its swim speed. The vortex is 5 feet wide at the base, up to 30 feet wide at the top, and up to 30 feet tall. The elemental controls the exact height, but it must be at least 10 feet.

The elemental's movement while in vortex form does not provoke attacks of opportunity, even if the elemental enters the space another creature occupies. Another creature might be caught in the vortex if it touches or enters the vortex, or if the elemental moves into or through the creature's space.

Creatures of Small size or less might take damage when caught in the vortex and may be swept up by it. An affected creature must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 15) when it comes into contact with the vortex or take 1d6 hit points of damage. It must also succeed on a second Reflex save or be picked up bodily and held suspended in the powerful currents, automatically taking 1d6 hit points of damage each round. An affected creature is allowed a Reflex save each round to escape the vortex. The creature still takes damage, but can leave if the save is suc-

cessful.

Creatures trapped in the vortex cannot move except to go where the elemental carries them or to escape the vortex. Creatures caught in the vortex can otherwise act normally, but must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + spell level) to cast a spell. Creatures caught in the vortex take a -4 penalty to Dexterity and a -2 penalty on attack rolls. The elemental can have only as many creatures trapped inside the vortex at one time as will fit inside the vortex's volume.

The elemental can eject any carried creatures whenever it wishes, depositing them wherever the vortex happens to be. A summoned elemental always ejects trapped creatures before returning to its home plane.

If the vortex's base touches the bottom, it creates a swirling cloud of debris. This cloud is centered on the elemental and has a diameter equal to half the vortex's height. The cloud obscures all vision, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have concealment, while those farther away have total concealment.

Those caught in the cloud must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level) to cast a spell.

An elemental in vortex form cannot make slam attacks and does not threaten the area around it.

Once the water elementals are defeated and the player characters reach the wooden dais in the center of this area, provide them with handout A. Then, read or paraphrase the following:

Standing on a wooden dais in the center of this hollowed-out section of the tree is a wooden statue. The statue depicts a miniature version of the Tree of Falling Mists, carved in loving detail down to the smallest leaves. Clear, crisp drops of water fall from the branches of this miniature tree.

At the base of this miniature tree is a brass plate. You see three small keyholes cut sharply into this plate. Inscribed at the bottom of this plate, just below the three keyholes, are the following words:

"Three keys need I, and three boxes might lie,

Or perhaps only one speaks truth on high.

With a careful eye and wits that are sly,

One may restore waters back to the sky."

Surrounding the base of the statue are three simple boxes, each measuring approximately 3 feet square and 2 feet tall. One box is crafted from gold, one from silver, and one from lead. Inscribed upon each of the three boxes are the following words:

Golden Box: *The key is in this box.*

Silver Box: *The key is not in this box*

Lead Box: *The key is not in the golden box.*

The solution to this puzzle is fairly simple – based on the given conditions (either all statements are false, or only one is true), this indicates that only the inscription on the lead box could possibly be true. So the key is in the silver box. If the player characters open the silver box, they find the third key necessary to open the portal to the Elemental Plane of Water. This key appears to be identical to the ones found in areas 1-4 and 3-2. Also contained in the silver box is treasure – a small pile of 4 sapphires, each worth 600 gp.

If the player characters open the gold or the lead box by mistake, they can potentially activate several *burning hands* traps – each of these boxes contains a separate *burning hands* trap. Both traps are activated the instant the lid for either the gold or lead box is lifted. Neither of these two boxes contains anything besides its unpleasant magical trap.

Burning Hands Trap (2): CR 3; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*burning hands*, 5th-level wizard, 5d4 fire, DC 11 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

At the GM's discretion, if the players have a difficult time trying to figure out the puzzle, an Intelligence check (DC 28) can be substituted for the players actually solving the riddle. However, if this alternative is used, player characters should not receive the bonus XP awarded for solving the puzzle (as noted in the "Rewards" section of this adventure). Bonus XP should also not be awarded if the player characters just randomly choose to open the silver box without bothering to figure out the riddle.

Once the player characters have the three keys, they can use the keys to restore the flowing waters to the Eradake River. The order that the keys are placed into the keyholes at the base of the miniature tree are unimportant – as long as the three keys are placed in the three holes and turned, the portal is re-opened. If the player characters reactivate the portal by using the three keys, read or paraphrase the following:

With the final turn of the third key, the miniature wooden tree that stands before you suddenly shimmers... and vanishes. In its place, a glowing golden disk suddenly appears – and with a deafening roar, a torrent of water flows forth from the disk. You also notice that the extensive pool of water surrounding you has slowly begun to drain away – judging from the rumbling you feel beneath your feet, it has swirled its way back to the empty banks of the Eradake River, as has the waters pouring forth from the golden disk.

With the mysterious rift elves defeated, and with the waters of the Eradake restored, you know with confidence that you have been victorious. Mistfall has once more returned to the Amn'crith Forest – and the town of Stagdale is indebted to your heroic deeds...

Rewards

Reward experience normally for combat and traps in the adventure. In addition, you may elect to award bonus XP to the party for exceptional action and heroic accomplishments. Use the list below as a guideline for awarding bonus experience points.

| Action | XP Bonus |
|---|----------|
| Finding the first key in area 1-4 | 250 XP |
| Capturing Syadta Skarne alive | 250 XP |
| Restoring the waters of the Eradake River | 250 XP |
| Capturing Ghalysar Tarm alive | 500 XP |
| Solving the riddle in area 3-3 | 500 XP |

Further Adventures

Based upon the details provided in the encounters above, here are some additional ideas for further adventures:

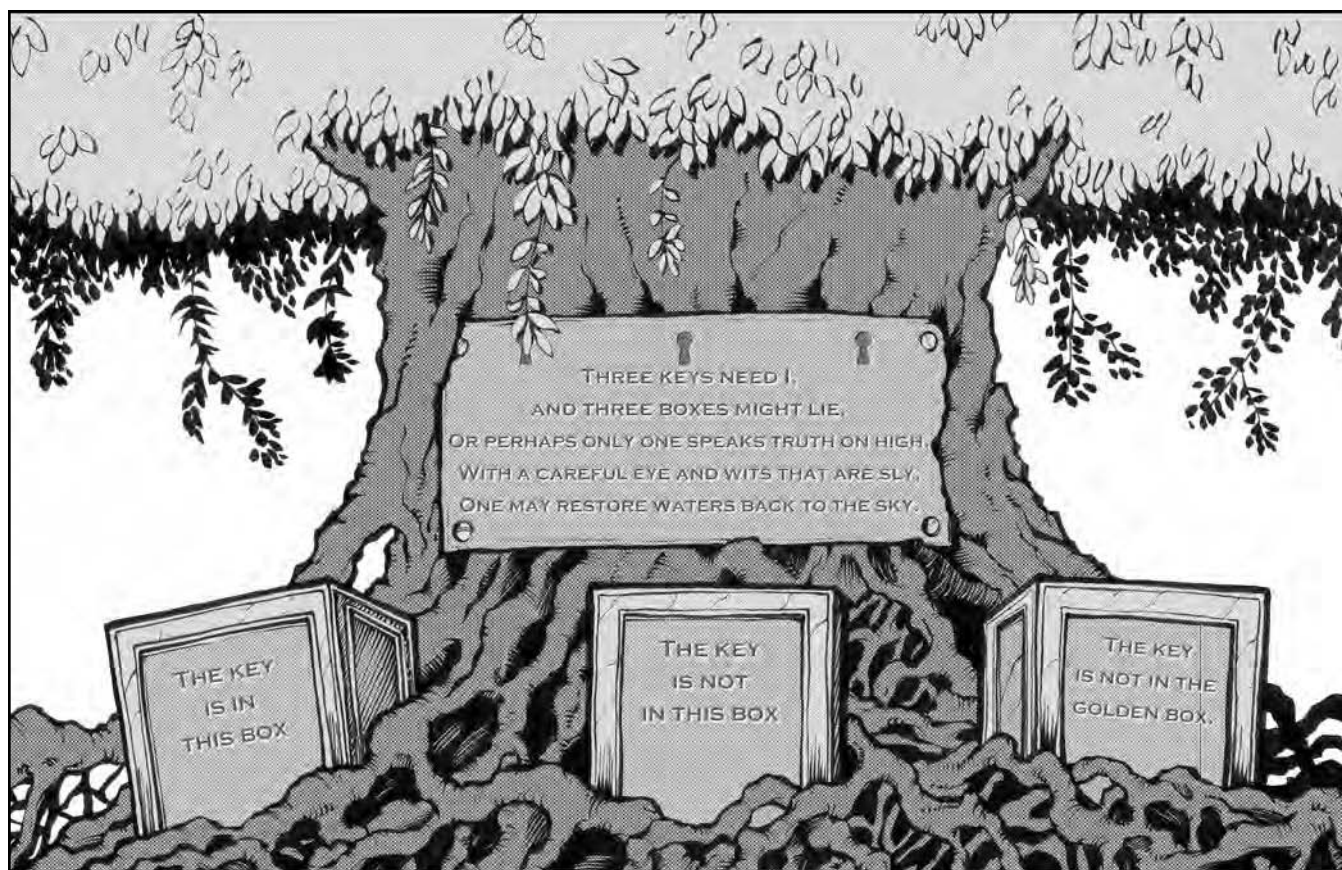
Doorways to Infinity: Found amongst Ghalysar Tarm's possession is a map to other worlds...or rather, doorways leading to other worlds. Though cryptic, the map shows that the doorways are located in the frozen wilderness far to the north, and possibly lead to great treasures. The metallic glyph disks are apparently required to operate the doors

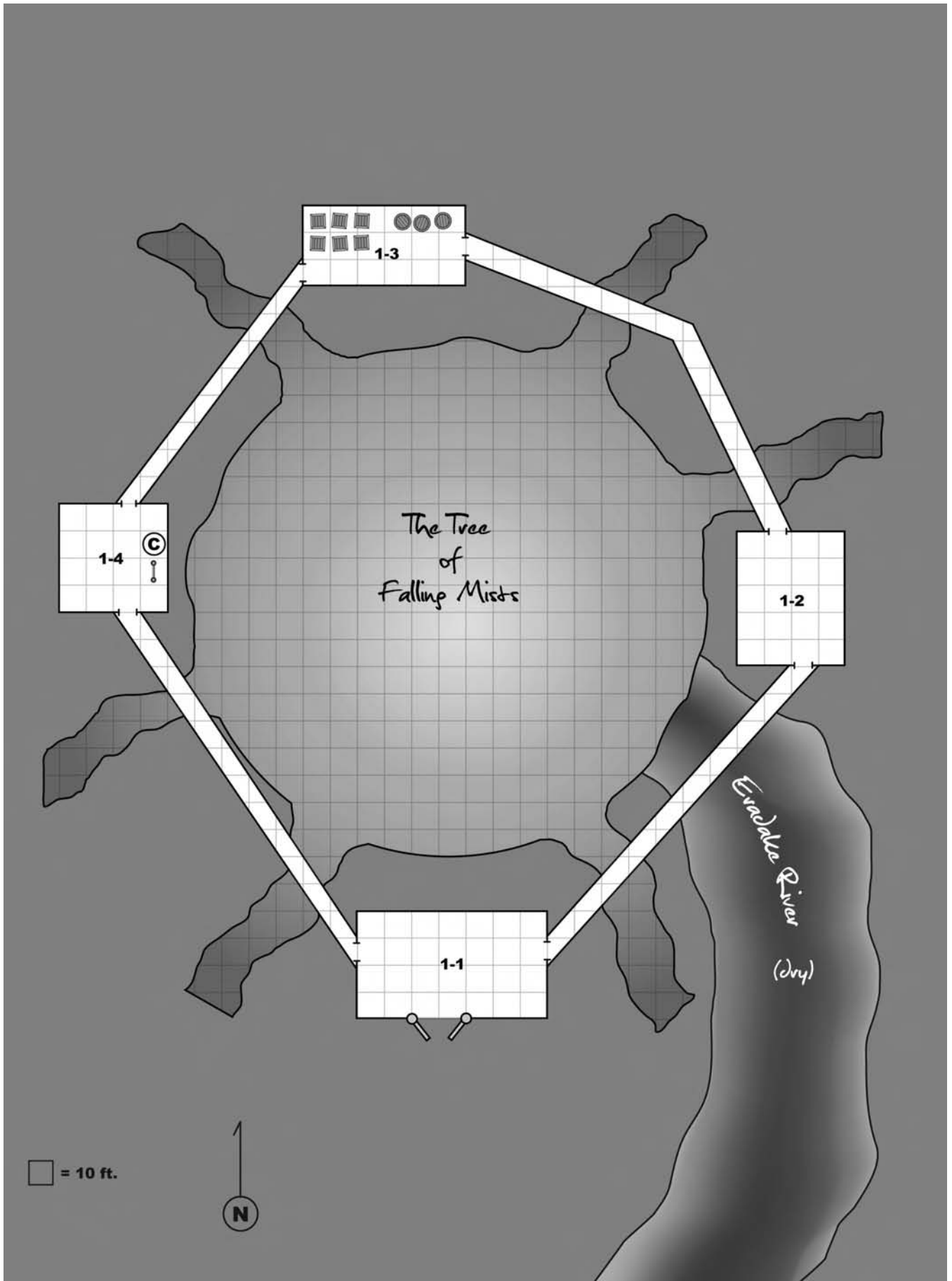
This option is highly recommended if the GM wishes to connect the DCC Known Realms – or a homebrewed campaign world – to other possible campaign worlds. After all, although the map says that there are "great treasures" beyond the mystical gateways, it's really up

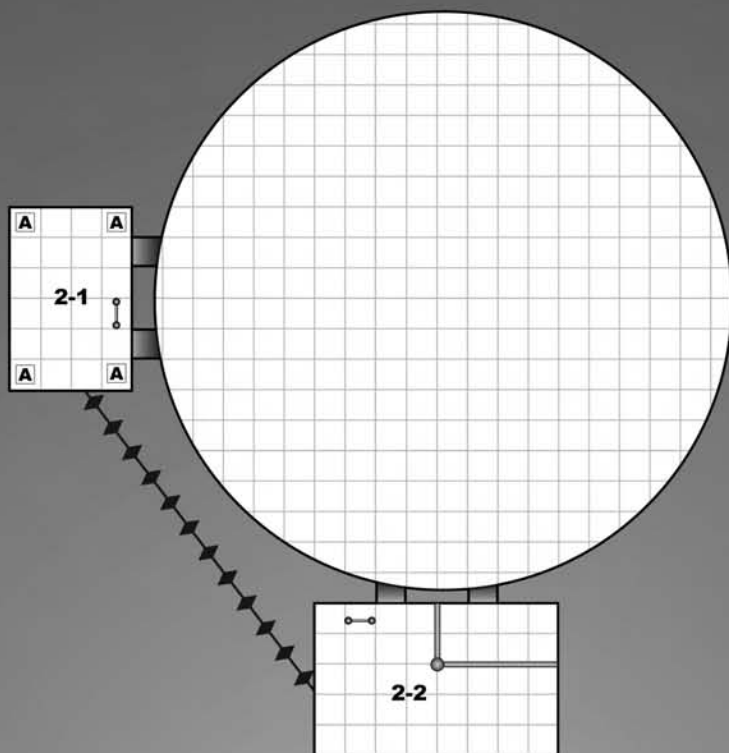
to the GM to decide what fantastic adventure lie beyond these doors...

Kingdoms of the Rift Elves: Though Ghalysar Tarm has been defeated, his capture or death only serves to send the once-dormant rift elves into a warlike frenzy. In order to prevent the rift elves from launching a full assault against the towns of Stagdale and Ironvale, the player characters must find a long-lost artifact hidden somewhere in the Amn'crith Forest. The artifact – the *Black Staff of Argador* – is said to have been wielded by the greatest of the rift elf warriors. Whomever holds the Black Staff is said to wield total command over all the rift elves – and perhaps whomever wields the Black Staff can convince the rift elves to cease their attacks against humankind, provided that the long-lost artifact is found in time...

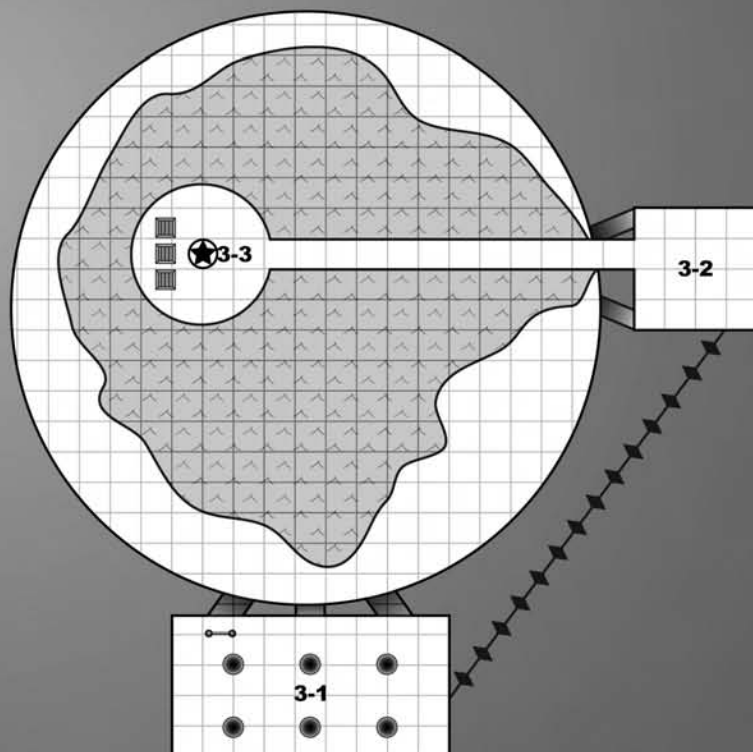
The Disk Conspiracy: Upon returning to Stagdale, the player characters learn that while the waters of the Eradake River have been restored to the town, many of the townspeople have vanished. While the player characters were fighting the rift elves at the Tree of Falling Mists, a number of strange metal disks, inscribed with glowing mystical symbols, began to appear in the town. Those possessing the disks began to act mysteriously, meeting under cover of darkness in deserted parts of town... and then they began to vanish without trace. It is said by some sages that the glyph-covered disks were forged in a place called Noldor's Keep, whose ruins lie buried somewhere in the Amn'crith Forest... perhaps if these ruins could be found, the secrets of the disks could be revealed – and the sinister sorcery affecting Stagdale could be reversed once and for all.







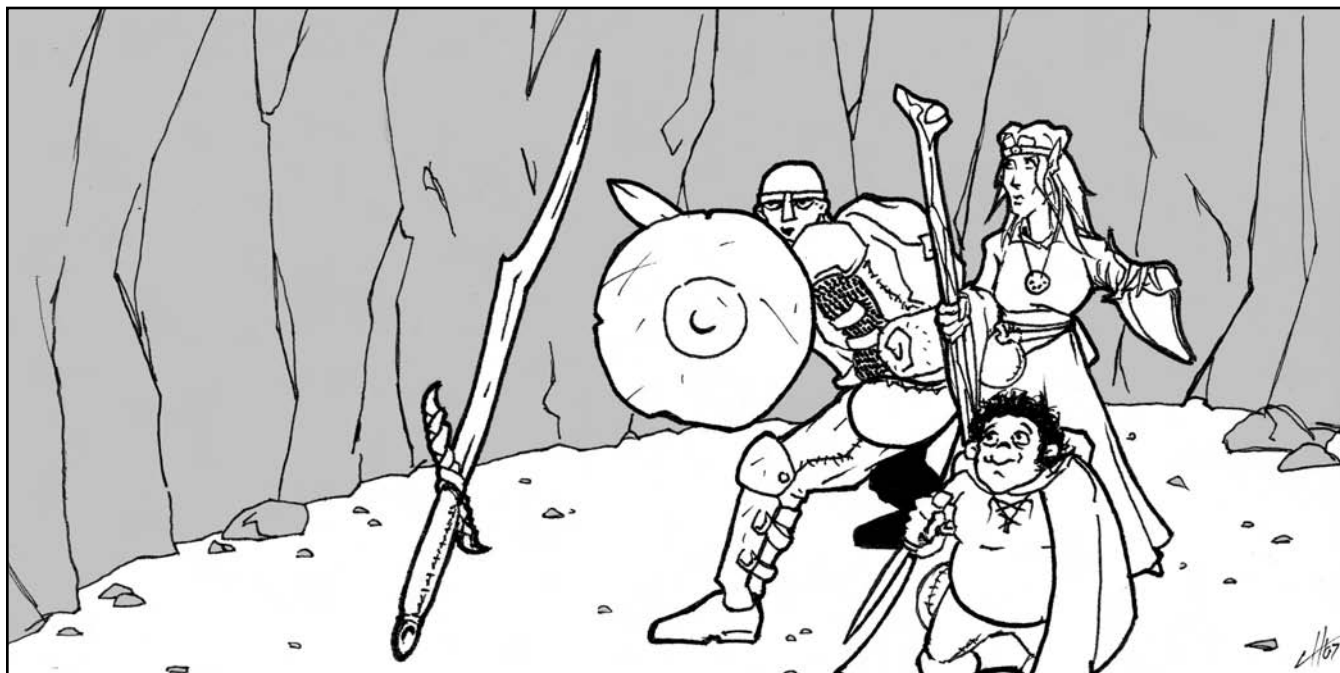
□ = 10 ft.



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Yellow Jade Heart

By Jeremy Simmons
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Yellow Jade Heart is designed for four to six characters of 4th to 6th level, with a total of 22-26 levels between party members. While the characters can be of any basic character class, a sure-handed warrior type and a keen-eyed trap finder will be essential. A large party, though, is not necessary. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor the adventure to your group's unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

Careful research, luck, or the whimsy of fate brings the heroes to a barren land of cliffs and high plains. Here, secreted in ancient caves set high above the rolling grasslands, is the resting place of a relic considered holy among warriors: Jhavara's Yellow Jade Heart.

Mistaken by most for a fabulous jewel, the Yellow Jade Heart is in fact the sword of the legendary warrior-queen Jhavara. In order to recover the relic, the heroes will need to overcome a series of challenges and traps, culminating in a single combat against the sword itself. If the heroes succeed, they will walk away with a powerful relic of a past age, but if they fail, it may cost them their lives.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|----|-------|------------------------------------|----|
| 1-3 | 85 | T | Pit, <i>sphere of annihilation</i> | 4 |
| 1-4 | 85 | T | King Statue trap | 5 |
| | | | Warrior Statue trap | 6 |
| 1-5 | 86 | T | Exploding sapphires trap | 7 |
| 1-6 | 87 | C | Chuul | 7 |
| 1-8b | 88 | P/T/C | The Gauntlet Puzzle, various traps | 10 |
| | | | Spectre | |
| 1-10 | 89 | C | Single combat with Jhavara's sword | 10 |

Scaling Information

Yellow Jade Heart is designed for four to six characters of 4th-6th level, but it can be easily modified for parties

of different sizes or levels. Much of the dungeon can be run with a small party, so don't alter the challenges unless the party consists of only one or two explorers.

Weaker parties (2 or fewer characters, or lower than 4th level): Reduce the DC of all traps by 5. Replace the *sphere of annihilation* in area 1-3 with a simple spiked pit. Halve the damage caused by the exploding sapphires in area 1-5. Replace the chuul in area 1-6 with a wight.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 6th level): Increase the DC of all traps by +5. Add a second chuul to area 1-6. Advance the spectre in area 1-8b. Double the hit points and attacks of the Yellow Jade Heart.

Getting the Players Involved

The adventure begins with the PCs at a cave entrance high above the Uru'Nuk Highlands. Use one of the following adventure hooks to get the characters started. Note that each of these hooks relies on the mistaken presumption that the Yellow Jade Heart is a jewel. Convincing a patron (and his well-armed minions) that the recovered Yellow Jade Heart is actually a sword can be the start of an entirely new adventure!

- The party is approached by a powerful lord who collects fabulous jewels, or a museum curator seeks to add the fabulous gem of legend to its collection and is offering more than its market value. This person commissions the heroes to travel west across the Dragonspire Mountains and reclaim the fabled Yellow Jade Heart.
- A religious faction lays claim to the Yellow Jade Heart, insisting that the holy relic must be reclaimed on behalf of their cult. A hooded ambassador offers the heroes a king's ransom for the successful recovery of the fabled jewel.
- The party's rogue is falsely (or rightly!) accused of breaking Thieves Guild edicts and double-crossing his fellow thieves. As penance for the rogue's act, the guildmaster describes a simple task: Recover the fabled Yellow Jade Heart. The guildmaster has the rogue ensorcelled and *geased* to ensure compliance ... or death.

Background Story

On a gray morning in the distant past, before the Northlands had a written history worth recording, Jhavara's horde thundered out of the barren eastern steppes. She sought a milder climate and a better home for her dwindling people, and in the lands north of the Kitezhan mountains, she found it. This fierce people lived and died so many ages ago that they've been all but forgotten, diffused into the Khonsurian Empire, which itself has nearly vanished. Only the warrior-queen's story remains, woven into newer legends and retold over campfires and tankards of ale.

An enigmatic figure, the warrior-queen is reputed to have slain many powerful foes, even defeating two demon princes in single combat. Skalds say that her keen, curved blade drank the black blood of countless challengers.

The true Jhavara differs little from the tales. She was a fierce swordswoman of exquisite skill, and if not beautiful, was at least terribly attractive in her power and poise. The warrior-queen fought not for coin or glory (but rarely refused either), nor even to be remembered in song or tale. Instead, she sought to eradicate evil in all forms. But for all her ferocity, she was not a zealot, for zeal implies fundamentalism and servitude, neither of which she had much truck with. Jhavara battled the forces of darkness because she possessed a clarity that few today could replicate: She just *knew* in the utter fiber of her being that she was brought into this world to take up arms against the vilest of evils. And her sword, the Yellow Jade Heart, absorbed much of this purity of purpose and boundless power. Stout indeed must be the heart of he or she who would wield it again.

Jhavara had a circle of devoted followers, warriors all, and most of them women, whom she trained and with whom she shared the treasure won from her campaigns. There were nineteen of these warriors, and their names are not remembered. It was these warrior-disciples who, acting upon their mistress' dying wish, hollowed out the caverns in the forbidding cliffs above the Highlands, building traps and challenges that would defend the Yellow Jade Heart until the prophesied time arrived, and another warrior of matchless determination and skill would take up the Yellow Jade Heart against evil once more.

Player Beginning

Read or paraphrase the following:

Last night you found a narrow path heading up into the cliff, but waited until the daylight came to hazard its course. After at least twenty switchbacks, the burning highlands are lost in the haze below. It's a different world up here, almost tolerable with the cloudy heavens above and the hellish heats below.

At last the rising path ends, leaving you standing before a trio of massive iron doors, set deep in the granite wall, where little has been done to hide them. A wide, flat cliff stretches before the strange portals, offering room to set up camp and get the rest you need so badly after the climb. Despite the burning sun, an unpleasant chill hangs in the air. You can't say why, but all your companions seem convinced that you are the first to stand here in forgotten eons. Perhaps the first since the door was closed for the first time.

The doors to the left and right are sealed – not by any man-made lock – but by the passage of time, a fact readily apparent to any dwarf or rogue. A DC 23 Strength check is required to wrench any of the doors open.

The door opening to area 1-2 is detailed below.

Who is Jhavara?

Bards can make a bardic knowledge check or any PC with Knowledge (history) can roll to determine what they know about the legendary Jhavara. GMs are encouraged to determine these results prior to this adventure so as to plant the seed early.

| DC | Type of Knowledge |
|----|---|
| 10 | Jhavara was a noble warrior-queen of an ancient people from the forgotten East. What little is known of her is the stuff of legend. |
| 20 | A relic known as the Yellow Jade Heart was imbued with all of Jhavara's ferocious dedication to good. |
| 25 | Jhavara was buried in a cliff-side tomb, somewhere in the Kitezhan Mountains. |
| 30 | Not simply a tomb, there was a specific purpose for Jhavara's reliquary: testing warriors to determine a soul worthy of her treasure. |

The Reliquary of the Yellow Jade Heart

These halls of testing were tunneled out of the granite cliffs over a thousand years ago, perhaps more. The exact date of Jhavara's death is lost to time; the last scant records of her people were lost in the decline of the Khonsurian Empire.

Masonry Wall: Hardness 9; hp 100 hp; break DC 35; Climb DC 13.

Good Wooden Door: Hardness 5; hp 15; break DC 16 (stuck), 18 (locked).

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Empty Guard Chamber: Read or paraphrase the following:

Once through the narrow passage, a small, rough-hewn chamber becomes visible. On opposite walls are the sooty remains of two perfunctory sconces, their fuel long since burned out. The walls seem to be carved from solid rock, and a stone seat carved from the living rock juts from the wall itself. There are a few scraps of what look to be wood on the floor.

On either side of her reliquary, Jhavara's servants carved out identical chambers without device or decoration, to serve as guard posts. Each was fitted with a chair and a wooden table and shelves, which have virtually disintegrated in the silent centuries that have passed. A few scraps of desiccated wood, still nailed together, lie in a small heap where the table once was.

Area 1-2 – Door to the Reliquary: When the party investigates the door leading to the reliquary, read or paraphrase the following:

In front of you is a wide door, set several feet deep into the rock, as though pressed into the stone by a god's hand! Wider than it is tall, the portal is made of the same veined granite as the cliffs surrounding it, and its face is decorated with tarnished brass studs. In the center of the door is a keyhole.

This door is almost 3 feet thick (hp 260, break DC 48), and a few of the studs (originally 72) are missing. The door slides open when the proper key is inserted, but sadly the key was lost centuries ago. Luckily the lock is fairly easy to pick (Open Lock DC 22), though it'll have to be cleaned out (centuries of sand have clogged it up!). When unlocked, it slides with a great screeching and grinding noise, and a blast of fetid air rushes out. Inside, utter darkness awaits the brave heroes.

Area 1-3 – The Lotus Chamber: Read or paraphrase the following:

Near the end of the passage, you feel the cool freshness of open air. A wide, lotus-shaped chamber expands outward before you. The ceiling soars at least fifty feet above you, and beyond a fifteen-foot ledge the floor falls away into utter blackness. Some twenty feet past the ledge, two stone walkways seem to hang in the void, arcing off into passages on the opposite side. A gentle breeze moves throughout.

Heroes hoping to gain either stone walkway (indicated as A and D on the map) will need ingenuity and some daring. A successful Use Rope check (DC 17) will allow PCs to hook the ledges with grappling hooks or the like. Daring rogues can attempt to climb the walls (Climb DC 25), but falling means almost-certain death (see below).

Trap: The pit has sloping sides that funnel down to a narrow opening that contains a *sphere of annihilation*. Heroes falling from the level of the ledge and the platform take 4d6 points of falling damage, and tumble down to the *sphere*. Those falling into the pit

can attempt a DC 30 Climb check to arrest their fall by gripping the wall. Otherwise, their companions have one round, and only one round, to save them. Adventurers who fall and cannot find a way to stop strike the *sphere* and are utterly and permanently destroyed.

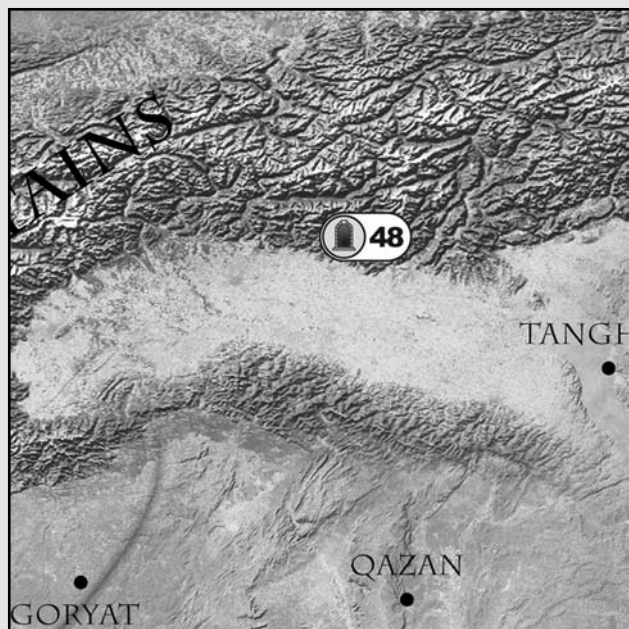
The placement of the *sphere* is fixed and cannot be moved without a successful casting of *dispel magic* (dispel check DC 35).

Development: Two additional exits, marked B and C, offer egress from the chamber, but the stone portals sealing these exits don't open unless the heroes have passed the challenges in areas 1-4 and 1-5. Once both challenges are defeated, the stone portals descend, like drawbridges, allowing passage and providing short ledges before exits B and C.

A DC 25 Spot check permits the heroes to notice a covered tunnel crossing the darkness below. Nearly 20 feet below the lip of the edge, the stone tunnel is nearly impossible to access from here, short of roping and hacking through almost two feet of stone. The easier way of accessing the tunnel is via platform B.

DCC World

In the spider-haunted shades of aeons past, a mighty warrior-princess led her horde west from the barren steppes and onto the fertile flood plains of the Saramanthian lowlands. Reputed for grasslands where the blades reach as high as a man's chest, this verdant region is home to vast herds of migratory animals – and the mighty beasts that prey upon them.



Area 1-4 – The Chamber of History: Read or paraphrase the following:

You follow a passage that curves and climbs gradually upward. At its end you come upon a great, golden door, a group of horsed warriors cut deeply in relief.

This is a bronze door, polished to a high sheen and seemingly unaffected by the incredible time that has passed since its forging. It is neither trapped nor locked.

The door swings open effortlessly to an incredible room. Each wall is covered in bands of carved pictographs, and five small statues stand against the walls. Brilliant colors scintillate from both the paintings and statues. In the center of the far wall is a wide alcove flanked by two empty pedestals. A third pedestal, also empty, stands in the very center of the alcove.

The walls are painted in a variety of beautiful patterns, though much of the paint has flaked away during the millennia. The common theme is a series of warriors.

Puzzle: The entire chamber is actually a puzzle that unlocks platform 1-3B. To solve the puzzle, the heroes must place the proper statue on the proper pedestal. Three of five statues match up to a specific pedestal. Solving the puzzle is fairly simple, but will require some investigation and a good eye for detail.

Statue A depicts a wizard. Statue B depicts a male warrior. Statue C, a female warrior. Statue D depicts a healer. And statue E depicts a king.

A close inspection of statue A (Search DC 15) reveals a pattern on the wizard's robes that matches a rune carved into the top of the first pedestal (to the left of the niche).

A Search (DC 15) of statue C reveals a pattern carved into the armor. This pattern matches a pattern carved into the top of the pedestal set within the niche.

And finally, a Search (DC 15) of statue D reveals three purple stones set into the healer's circlet. The stones match those set into the top of the third pedestal.

The statues must be carried and lifted onto the pedestals by whatever means the party can manage. A Strength check (DC 24) is necessary to lift a statue.

There is no particular sequence in which the statues must be placed, nor does anything happen until the third (whichever it might be) is placed on the pedestal. The moment this occurs, a faint sound from far off in the dungeon hints at action: a deep, grinding boom, followed by a ratcheting sound that ends suddenly. All that remains now is for the party to encounter the choice in area 1-5; once this is done, the portals sealing platforms 1-3B and C open up, allowing the heroes to pass. (They won't see a difference in area 1-3 until both areas 1-4 and 1-5 are successfully encountered.)

The problem occurs when anyone makes the mistake of removing the incorrect statue (B or E). If either the Male Warrior or the King statue is removed completely from its niche, a trap is sprung. Moving the statues back into their slots will not reset the trap.

Moving the King statue releases a fusillade of darts, while removing the Warrior statue triggers a whirling poison blades trap.

King Statue Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; Atk +18 ranged (1d4+1, dart); multiple targets (1d8 darts per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 25.

Male Warrior Statue Trap: CR 6; mechanical; timed trigger; no reset; +10 melee (1d8+4/19–20 plus poison, longsword); poison (purple worm poison, DC 24 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str); multiple targets (one target in each of three 5-ft. squares adjacent to statue); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

Area 1-5 – A Matter of Honor: Read or paraphrase the following:

Cautiously, you follow a passage that curves and climbs gradually upward. At its end you stand before a great, golden door, deeply cut in relief of a scene of a queen bestowing medals upon her warriors.

This is a bronze door, polished to a high sheen and seemingly unaffected by the incredible time that has passed since its forging. The door is neither locked nor trapped.

The door swings open effortlessly, and the chamber before you contains a surprising vision: Your eyes are arrested by the sight of a tired, wounded man strung up over a pit in a bizarre device similar to the balances used by gold merchants, with empty measuring plates hanging below both arms. His weary head lifts up slowly to you, eyes imploring, his mouth dry and cracked. Dried blood covers his face and stains his filthy clothes. He is completely bound to the device, but upon seeing you, he summons up the strength from somewhere and in a voice like a most pathetic child, he rasps:

"My gods, I feared no one would ever find me here. Who are you? My name is...uh, my name...I...I don't remember...my...name."

If the heroes speak with the man, his voice trails off for a moment, but with a sudden fierceness and determination he looks up again and continues.

"A woman of the cruelest temperament guided me here, and cast a vile spell upon me that keeps me alive without food or drink. I ask you to free me from this bondage, or slay me if you cannot save my life. I can offer you no reward, but I implore you for all that once was decent in this foul world, save me!" He finishes with a note of terror and madness, and fresh drops of sweat have beaded on his forehead.

Scale Puzzle: Just before the pit is a silver tray. Resting in it are a pair of star sapphires, each the size of a dove's egg. An Appraise check (DC 20) estimates their worth at 10,000 gp apiece, but even PCs without the skill to appraise them know that they must be worth a king's ransom.

Once the adventurers notice the gems, the man speaks again.

"I'm afraid those are the price of my freedom. Placing them in the plate to my left breaks the spell that binds me. If you put anything else in there, I will be cut to pieces. At least, that's what she told me would happen. I have little desire to



test her word.” The old man mumbles incoherently for a while, then sighs heavily before continuing. “I know it’s a sore test. All I ask is that if you must take the jewels for your own, then slay me first! I cannot endure another day of this torture.”

This is Jhavara’s test of the honor of whoever would take up her sword. Treasure, in her mind, is never worth the life of an innocent, even a stranger. Honor was in fact the most crucial attribute of a warrior or a ruler, in Jhavara’s estimation.

If the jewels are placed in the measuring plate as the victim asks, a whirling field of purple, white, and yellow lights circles around the device like a magical wind, and the man is released. He fades away with a look of unimaginable relief on his face. After he disappears, the rack falls into pieces with a great noise and violence, collapsing into the pit. But the reward for “honorable” PCs is not just the intangible; if they look at the tray where the sapphires originally had rested, they will see:

- *Bracers of armor* +2
- *Wand of magic missiles* (CL 5th)
- Divine scroll containing the spells *cure critical wounds*, *holy sword*, and *speak with dead*.

However, if the PCs pocket the sapphires, leaving

the poor man in his miserable state, they will find the choice an ill one. Firstly, the old man bellows in a strange language and floats up and out of the machinery as though he were never trapped there; pointing a bony finger at the greedy adventurers, he utters what must be an awful oath or curse, then closes his eyes and vanishes into a silvery mist.

Silence falls over the chamber. One round later, the sapphires explode into deadly, razor-sharp shards.

Regardless of the party’s choice, all that remains now is for them to solve the puzzle in area 1-4; once this is done, the portals sealing platforms 1-3B and C grind open, allowing the heroes to pass. (They won’t see a difference in area 1-3 until both areas 1-4 and 1-5 are successfully encountered.)

Exploding Sapphires Trap: CR 6; magic device; location trigger (stealing the gems); no reset; exploding shards (11d6 slashing damage to all targets within 15 ft., DC 19 Reflex save half damage).

Area 1-6 – Squatters: Read or paraphrase the following:

As soon as you turn the corner in the passage, you see a small pile of rubble against the right-hand wall about twenty or thirty feet away. There appears to be a massive hole where the wall has been punched through, and a crude passage tunnels into the rock beyond. A faint whiff of foul air and moisture emanates from the hole.

A chuul burrowed down into Jhavara’s Reliquary, following a narrow underground stream. Recently that passage collapsed, trapping the chuul in the reliquary. The monster is near starvation and desperately hungry, and thus attacks without the slightest provocation and fights to the death.

The chuul’s lair contains nothing of value, only stinking heaps of refuse and its own filth, with one exception: a small teak box with bronze hinges and corner caps, which contains a platinum necklace set with 9 topazes (value 500 gp each). How an item of delicacy and beauty like this box found its way into such a den of horror and waste is practically unimaginable, and the chuul isn’t telling.

Chuul: CR 7; Large aberration (aquatic); HD 11d8+44; hp 93; Init +7; Spd 30 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8; Grp +17; Atk claw +12 melee (2d6+5); Full Atk 2 claws +12 melee (2d6+5); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Constrict 3d6+5, improved grab, paralytic tentacles; SQ Amphibious, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Hide +13, Listen +11, Spot +11, Swim +13*; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

*A chuul has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

SA – Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a chuul deals 3d6+5 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a chuul must hit with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict or, on its next turn, transfer a grabbed opponent to its tentacles.

Paralytic Tentacles (Ex): A chuul can transfer grabbed victims from a claw to its tentacles as a move action. The tentacles grapple with the same strength as the claw but deal no damage. However, they exude a paralytic secretion. Anyone held in the tentacles must succeed on a DC 19 Fortitude save each round on the chuul's turn or be paralyzed for 6 rounds. While held in the tentacles, paralyzed or not, a victim automatically takes 1d8+2 points of damage each round from the creature's mandibles.

SQ – Amphibious (Ex): Although chuuls are aquatic, they can survive indefinitely on land.

Area 1-7 – Trapdoor in the Floor: Read or paraphrase the following:

The passage opens into a rectangular room with relief carvings around the walls at eye level. The passage continues out the opposite side of the room.

These carvings are more depictions of Jhavara's personal combats against some of the demons she was reputed to have slain.

A stone trapdoor is set in the middle of the room, with a small keyhole in its center. Opening the stone door requires the key from area 1-8C. Alternately, it can be picked with a DC 20 Open Lock check, broken open with a DC 30 Strength check or destroyed from taking 150 points of damage (hardness 8). Once the trapdoor is opened, the heroes can drop 10 feet to the base of the stairs leading to area 1-9.

Area 1-8 – The Gauntlet and the Key: Read or paraphrase the following:

A short flight of stairs rises to a plain-looking, square room. In the center of the chamber is a short, square pedestal. A stone tablet carved to look like an open book rests atop it. Beyond the pedestal on the opposite side of the chamber is

a narrow opening that leads into darkness.

This is the final challenge, a test of reflexes and quick thinking to earn the chance to face and attempt to tame her sword. The "book" explains (in Jhavara's long-vanished language, a precursor to the modern Common tongue) what is at stake. It describes the various dangers in the gauntlet, riddling that:

"The right count will lead you through without a sliver..."

Music over three, and add the number of tests you've passed,

But fear the dread march of Death, whose drummer's lost the beat!"

To read the inscription, a hero must cast a *comprehend languages* spell or succeed on a DC 25 Decipher Script check.

The narrow passage to the north is crammed with a diabolical array of shooting darts, stabbing spears, whirling blades, and crushing blocks! If the heroes approach the passage, a solemn drum strikes up, keeping regular time, and the instant they enter, the dire traps are triggered.

In order to pass the gauntlet, a brave hero must count to five (3 plus the 2 traps passed in areas 1-4 and 1-5) between making 5-foot steps down the corridor. The requires unerring calm and poise; a PC advancing down the hall in this manner must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence and DC 10 Wisdom check each 5-foot step. If this is done, the PC slips down the corridor, narrowly dodging each trap.

One complication remains – a challenge to test the mettle of any hero. The round after the adventurer makes it to the 10-foot mark, a shadowy spectre steps from the walls and slowly begins to close with the PC. The spectre moves slightly quicker than the PC – just quick enough to catch him at the 20-foot mark. The hero has two options: remain faithful to the count and battle the spectre for 2 rounds (one at the 20-foot mark, and one at the 25-foot mark) or flee the spectre, risking the traps.

As long as it remains in the hall, the spectre benefits from +6 turn resistance. Once the hero exits the hall, the spectre vanishes back into the walls, reemerging only if another person attempts to enter from the south. Similarly, the traps are only activated if a character attempts to enter from the south; a hero returning from the north has nothing to fear.

Distance Down Passage Trap

| | |
|--------|----------------------------|
| 5 ft. | Spiked Blocks from Ceiling |
| 10 ft. | Whirling Poison Blades |
| 15 ft. | Fusillade of Darts |
| 20 ft. | Wall Scythe Trap |
| 25 ft. | Stone Blocks from Ceiling |

Treasure: The brave PC who can dodge these devilish traps reaches the nearly identical chamber at the opposite end where, on another pedestal, rests an ornate crystal and adamantine key. This key is what permits final access to the stone-and-steel reliquary atop the cliff where the Yellow Jade Heart rests.

Spiked Blocks from Ceiling: CR 6; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset every round; Atk +20 melee (6d6, spikes).

Whirling Poison Blades: CR 6; mechanical; timed trigger; automatic reset every round; Atk +10 melee (1d4+4/19–20 plus poison, dagger); poison (purple worm poison, DC 24 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Str/2d6 Str); multiple targets (one target in each of three preselected 5-ft. squares).

Fusillade of Darts: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +18 ranged (1d4+1, dart); multiple targets (1d8 darts per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 19.

Wall Scythe Trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset every round; Atk +20 melee (2d4+8/x4, scythe).

Stone Blocks from Ceiling: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset every round; Atk +10 melee (4d6, stone blocks).

Spectre: CR 7; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 7d12; hp 45; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect); AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 plus energy drain); SA Energy drain, create spawn; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, +6 turn resistance, sunlight powerlessness, undead traits, unnatural aura; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str –, Dex 16, Con –, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +14, Search +12, Spot +14, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks); Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative.

SA – Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a spectre becomes a spectre in 1d4 rounds.

Spawn are under the command of the spectre that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a spectre's incorporeal touch attack gain two negative levels. The DC is 15 for the Fortitude save to remove a negative level. For each such negative level bestowed, the spectre gains 5 temporary hit points.

SQ – Sunlight Powerlessness (Ex): Spectres are powerless in natural sunlight (not merely a *daylight* spell) and flee from it. A spectre caught in sunlight cannot attack and can take only a single move or attack action in a round.

Unnatural Aura (Su): Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of a spectre at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range.

Area 1-9 – Staircase Rising: The party can reach this point either by following passageway 1-3B all the way around and up a long flight of stone stairs, or by opening the trapdoor in area 1-7. When they arrive, read or paraphrase the following:

A black granite staircase rises up into a rectangular chamber with a soaring ceiling. The entire ceiling is painted in heroic scenes of combat, where a female warrior stands tall amid fallen comrades, dealing the killing blow to a demon at least three times her height. In her hands, a magnificent sword glows like yellow sunlight with vengeful magic. A significant amount of the paint has disintegrated away from the mural, but the effect is hardly spoiled. On the opposite end of the chamber, another passage continues on.

There is little to fear or to gain in this chamber, except for, perhaps, a bit more knowledge of the wielder of the Yellow Jade Heart. The passage on the far side of the chamber leads to the spiral staircase that rises to the top of the cliffs.

Area 1-10 – The Yellow Jade Heart: Read or paraphrase the following:

An expertly hewn set of spiral steps leads straight up through the rock, opening up at last onto a peak looking out over the mountains. Wind howls across over the barren cliffs, and a strange stillness hangs over this place. A small, unassuming reliquary of steel and stone can be seen on the far side of the mountaintop.

This open space is only accessible through

Jhavara's dungeon, and is protected by ferocious crosswinds that prevent even flying creatures from approaching. Even if one could locate the small area in a wilderness of jagged, rocky peaks and navigate the unpredictable winds, the entire area is protected by a magic ward that cannot be penetrated except by a carefully worded *wish*, or a *gate* cast by a spellcaster of at least 12th level.

The reliquary contains the Yellow Jade Heart, which rests inside on a wood and velvet-lined platform. Most of the velvet has crumbled away, but surprisingly there are still some scraps.

The kris is an exquisite sword, a masterpiece of the forger's art. Its hilts are bands of gold spun together in a braid, wrapped in rich red leather. A large topaz the shade of melted butter is set in the base, gleaming and flawless. Its blade is an unusual shape; curving like a wave tapering towards its bitter tip. The reliquary is not locked in any way, but any who reach in to touch the sword trigger the following sequence of events:

Once the sword is disturbed (even if by a spell), a disembodied woman's voice echoes around the mountaintop, intoning the challenge:

"None shall wield this blade without proving themselves worthy. Champion, stand forth in single combat against me, and prove thyself now!"

The sword rises and hangs in the air as if held by an invisible opponent, moving gently up and down in anticipation...

If a hero agrees to the battle, single combat is joined. There is no invisible opponent – the sword itself is animated and fights as a *dancing* weapon. The Yellow Jade Heart is a unique creature, similar in ability to a *dancing* weapon combined with a Small animated object, though it receives much of Jhavara's fighting prowess. The Jade Heart is a kris sword, a wavy-bladed weapon similar in origin to the blades from Áereth's Shadowed West.

Jhavara's sword fights to the "death," but honorably. It will not strike an opponent who has fallen down, and will not deliver the killing blow to a prone opponent who begs for mercy.

If the sword wins the fight, or if two or more adventurers engage it in combat at one time, it will point directly to the skies and slowly disappear. Jhavara's voice will whisper out of the air, "You were not worthy." If it is defeated, it will shatter and the pieces scatter across the ground. Closer inspection will reveal that the shards are nothing but pig iron, and the sword itself is whole and sitting on its stand in

the reliquary. The victorious warrior may then retrieve the sword easily.

Conclusion: The GM should not feel *obligated* to let the PCs pass the tests and gain Jhavara's sword. If they are incapable of passing the tests the way Jhavara has designed them, then they're simply not ready, and perhaps should return when they've gained a level or two.

Treasure: If the final test is passed, the victorious warrior receives the sword and may access all the powers that go with it.

When wielded by a character of good alignment, the Yellow Jade Heart is treated as a +2 *defending short sword*. Additionally, the sword bestows upon its chosen wielder the feats of Two-Weapon Fighting and Two-Weapon Defense. The feats only function when the sword is drawn, and if the sword is ever lost, so are the feats.

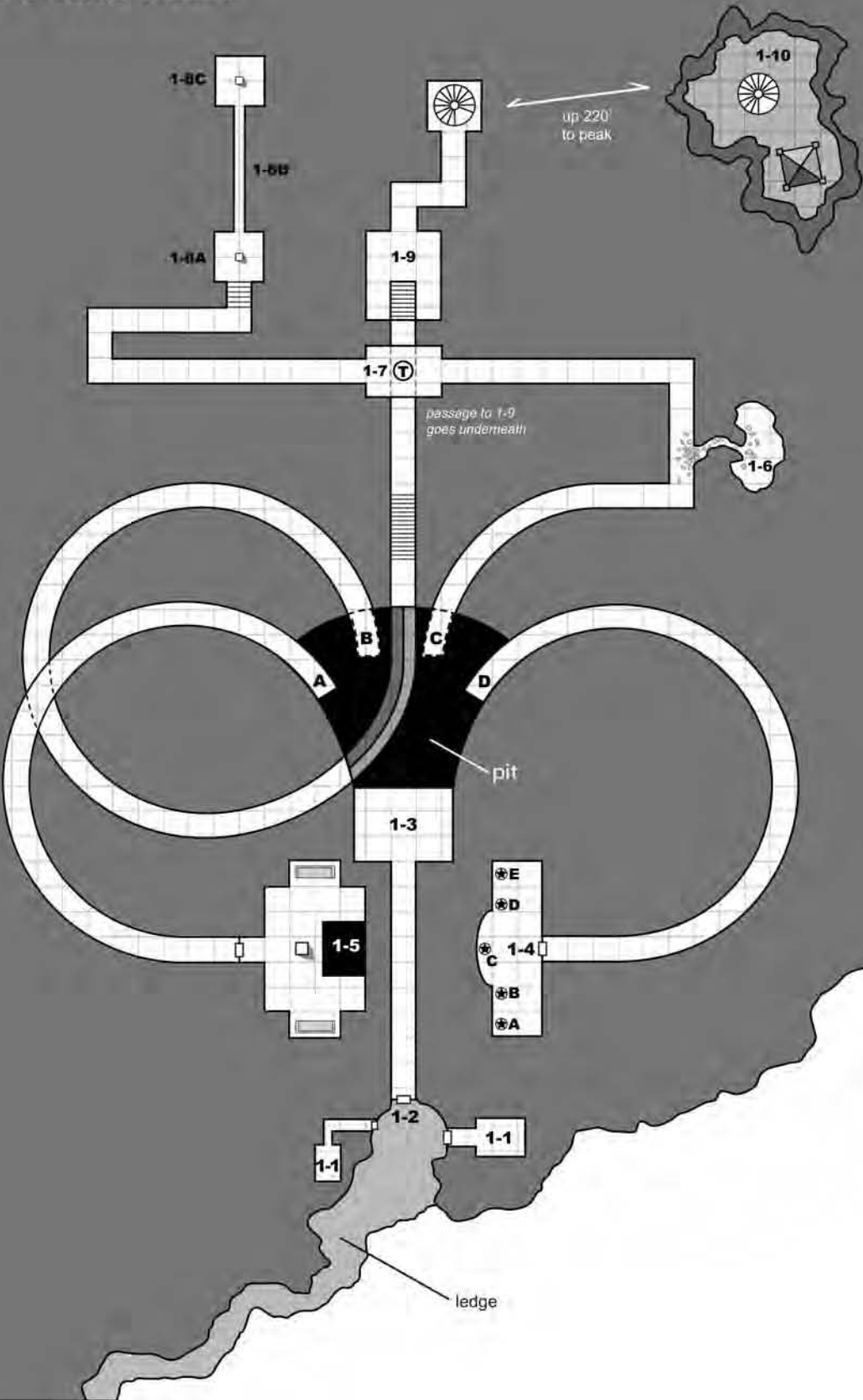
No one may handle the sword without accepting the same challenge as the first warrior faced. Anyone who defeats the sword is the new owner! (The Heart is not picky; it only chooses the most able warrior as its owner.)

Yellow Jade Heart: CR 1; Advanced Small construct; HD 3d10+10; hp 40; Init +1; Spd fly 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp –3; Atk/Full Atk kris +6 melee (1d6+2); SA See text; SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; hardness 8; AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will –4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: None.

SQ – Hardness (Ex): An animated object has the same hardness it had before it was animated.

the reliquary of the
Yellow Jade Heart

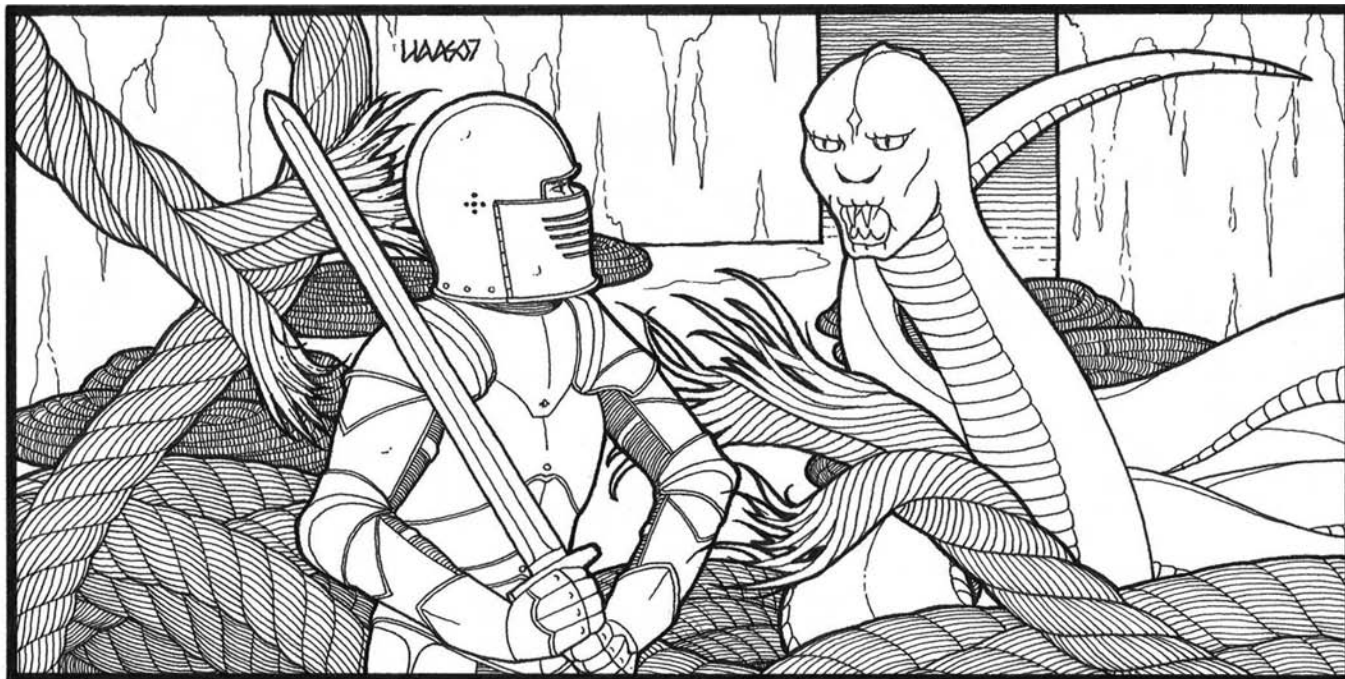


Dungeon Crawl Classics

The Nightmare Closet

By Jeff LaSala

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

The Nightmare Closet is an adventure that pits the heroes against nightmares of the worst kind: a small boy's. Investigation of a secret door discovered in the bedroom of a wealthy noble's mansion leads to a confrontation against his son's dreadful destiny. The adventure can be a simple stand-alone urban adventure, acting as a filler session during a party's "downtime" in a city between adventures. Or it can serve as an introduction to the dream gods of Aéreth, Gil'Mâridth and Ôæ, and the unseen oneiric war their followers fight.

The adventure can accommodate almost any combination of character classes, but the heroes would benefit from the presence of a cleric. Anyone with ranks in Knowledge (reli-

gion) or Knowledge (arcana) may be able to shed some light on the phantasmagorical nature of the dungeon.

Adventure Summary

The PCs are hired by a wealthy noble and former military officer named Lord Eriq Darvyn to investigate a secret door that one of his servants discovered in his own manor. Lord Eriq, his family, and all his servants have been plagued by nightmares for the last couple of weeks and his son Frederic has recently fallen into a comatose state. Lord Eriq is certain the passage beyond the secret door leads to the source of his family's affliction, but all who approach it are subject to ineffable dread. The PCs must descend into a nightmarish, spiraling dungeon and confront the source of emerging evil.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a

trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|-----|-----|---------|--|----|
| 1-2 | 96 | T, C, P | Oneiric troll, Ftr2 Spiral blade trap | 10 |
| 1-4 | 98 | C | Altered dark naga 2 animated objects | 9 |
| 1-5 | 99 | C | <i>Guffaw</i> , ogre Rog5 | 7 |
| 1-6 | 100 | C | <i>Pelzor</i> and <i>Rozlep</i> , ghoul Mnk5 | 9 |
| 1-8 | 102 | C | <i>Messianic Frederic</i> , human Clr5/Brd2 | 8 |

Scaling Information

The Nightmare Closet is designed for four to six characters that are of approximately 8th level, but it can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 8th level): Reduce all NPC class levels by one.

Stronger parties (5 or more characters, or higher than 8th level): Add another class level to each of the monsters in areas 1-2 through 1-6, and give Frederic two more levels of cleric. In addition, for higher levels, consider adding shadows to the final confrontation in area 1-8, who emerge as very real monsters from beneath the bed...as all children know there are.

Getting the Players Involved

There are various ways to get the PCs involved in this adventure, most of which involve the simple motive of gold. Essentially, word reaches the party that a wealthy Cristine noble is searching for adventurers for a special (and hush-hush) errand that the local clerics could not accomplish. Since he doesn't want his political accomplices or allies to know of his recent troubles, he has been "reduced" to employing adventurers. So how can this news reach the PCs' ears? Here are some possibilities:

- If any of the PCs is a cleric of a good or neutrally-aligned deity, the noble's plea has been passed to her from her own church. Since the priests were not able to solve the problem, they're looking for the more adventurous arm of the church to help out. If the PCs agree to look into the matter, the church will receive a small portion of the noble's proffered reward (10%), but they will give the PCs three *potions of cure moderate wounds* (CL 4).

- A rogue or bard in the party learns that the noble has contacted the higher echelons of a local thieves guild, such is the man's desperation. The PCs can accept the job via the guild's sponsorship, but must surrender to the guild 15% of the reward for the details (who's hiring, where he lives, etc.).
- One of the PCs could be related to the noble in question, Lord Eriq Darvyn – perhaps as a distant cousin. In this case, Lord Eriq has contacted the PC directly, pleading for help. The reward he offers would be the same, plus an additional 3,000 gp.

Background Story

Lord Eriq Darvyn has long since retired from the Cristine Imperial Army and settled into family life at his ancestral manor in the city of Archbridge (or any large city that best fits the GM's campaign). Siring four daughters and one son, the wealthy nobleman has done well for his family and his fortune, until recently.

It began several months ago when his only son and youngest child, Frederic, took ill. When the 8-year-old became bed-ridden, Lord Eriq sent for clerics from the city's major temples. Their prayerful administrations cured him, as expected, but the sickness returned within days after each treatment. One of the elder clerics advised Lord Eriq to allow Frederic to endure the illness, saying that if the boy could be rid of it naturally, it should never afflict him again. Frederic was too weak to venture from his room, but the sickness never seemed too serious, so Lord Eriq reluctantly agreed. Frederic's skin had grown pale and feverish, and he experienced troubling dreams, but gradually even these symptoms began to fade. However, several days ago Frederic lapsed into a comatose state. Lord Eriq panicked, summoning the clerics again. At the same time, the nobleman's dreams became disturbing, and even the rest of his family suffered from nightmares and half-remembered night terrors.

Using powerful curative spells, the summoned clerics were only able to revive the boy for minutes at a time, during which Frederic fell into demential fits. When the clerics attempted to exorcize him, they found no foreign spirits possessing him. Confounded, Lord Eriq sent the clerics away. Soon after, one of the maids accidentally stumbled upon a secret door within the closet of Frederic's room. She ran screaming when she dared to open it and has since been admitted to Archbridge Asylum.

An inexplicable dread has stricken everyone who has attempted to approach the closet since the secret door was first opened. Fear of what lay within prompted Lord Eriq to have his son moved to another part of the house, but Frederic grew violent in his preternatural slumber when the attempt was made to remove him from the

room. To add to the distress, the nightmares Lord Eriq and his family have been suffering have only worsened since the secret door's discovery. If the rumor is true, even some of the neighbors have begun to suffer troubling dreams.

Unable to endure it any longer, Lord Eriq sent his wife and daughters away from Archbridge to stay with his sister in her country estate. He hopes their nightmares will fade by going far away from what he is convinced is the source: that damnable secret door! Desperate now, Lord Eriq is seeking adventurers for resolution of the situation by finding and destroying the source of his son's affliction. He will offer whoever takes the job a small fortune if they can lay the matter to rest.

The Truth

The source of the evil plaguing Lord Eriq and his family is Frederic himself; sort of.

Frederic was always a very talented and imaginative child. Voraciously curious, he would often sneak out of his room after bedtime and eavesdrop on his grandfather, a retired Ciestine officer like his father, as he swapped war stories with his friends – sometimes in gruesome detail. After one such tale, Frederic had a terrifying nightmare. So vivid was this twisted dream that it caught the notice of a night hag named Sajarr. The planar hag consulted with her mistress, the evil goddess Gil'Mâridth, the Torment (see sidebar). The wicked goddess informed Sajarr that an unholy shrine built within Darvyn manor had been constructed decades ago for just such a soul. It had seeded his dreams with her dread influence, a catalyst for his destiny. For Frederic had been chosen by the Torment herself to become a prophet and demagogue champion of the Cult of Mâridth.

To set this prophecy in motion, Sajarr murdered and replaced Frederic's favorite aunt – Lord Eriq's own sis-

ter. She began to exchange letters with Frederic from afar, slowly insinuating herself into his life with honeyed words and veiled malignance. Sajarr cultivated Frederic's imaginative mind with her frequent letters, and the boy's father was oblivious to the slow and steady decline, until the nightmares Frederic suffered brought him into the grasp of Gil'Mâridth.

The sickness that has stricken young Frederic is the work of the Torment herself, meant to keep him in close proximity to a place desecrated with her power: for within the room's closet, a secret door leads to a very old and long-neglected shrine of Gil'Mâridth, a sanctum built in secret by the delusional architect of Darvyn Manor. Frederic, oblivious to the truth, has visited the shrine several times, carrying his aunt's letters with him, and has become obsessed with her nursery rhymes and the dreams he's been having. But now, in his comatose state, he no longer needs the shrine to continue his steady rise to power. It's in the Dream itself that Gil'Mâridth's evil germinates.

Death in the Dream

This adventure will send the PCs through the secret door into the hidden shrine of Gil'Mâridth. Beyond that, they will enter the Dream itself, a realm normally unreachable by waking minds or bodies. If any of the PCs are killed beyond area 1-2 – where they begin to enter the Dream – they can still survive this adventure. If a PC's body is carried back out of the dungeon to area 1-1 again, his companions will discover that he is, after all, merely unconscious. He is stable, with hit points at -1, and a Constitution that has been drained to 3.

Of course, there is no need to tell the players any of this until they return to area 1-1 having defeated Frederic! Dying in the Dream, however, does carry a shock to the system: a PC loses 1 permanent hit point or 4,000 XP (player's choice). If any slain PCs are left behind anywhere beyond area 1-2, they are lost for good. Or, at the

The Dream and Gil'Mâridth

The Dream is that fantastical realm where all sentient minds go when they sleep. Maintained and guarded by Ôæ, the god of dreams and imagination, the Dream is a bizarre and wondrous realm where temporal visitors wade through altered versions of the waking world or navigate through the ancient lands of the old gods. But not all such wanderings are pleasant. Not all such dreams are unsullied by evil...

Gil'Mâridth (gil-mahr-idth) is the neutral evil goddess of fear and nightmares. More often called the Torment, the Great Hag, or the Dread of Night, she is the spoiler of dreams and a bringer of madness and mental anguish to mortals. Within the Dream's limitless landscapes Gil'Mâridth occupies a vast vortex of darkness and horror into which even her fearless minions cannot venture far. She has been the archenemy of Ôæ himself since the dawn of creation. The domains associated with Gil'Mâridth are Dream, Evil, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the sap (the better to subdue and torture), and her symbol is a dark spiral or vortex, the reoccurring image central to her every scheme.

More information on Gil'Mâridth, Ôæ, and the Dream domain can be found in DCC#35.

GM's discretion, said PCs can possibly be found somewhere else in the waking world in a comatose state, and must be rescued another day by entering the Dream again (see *Further Adventures*).

The Hidden Shrine of Gil'Mâridth

The original architect of the Darvyn estate suffered horrific nightmares of his own. One such twisted dream prompted him to create the hidden passage beyond one of the bedrooms – what is now Frederic's room. Physically, the passage extends only a short distance beneath the streets of the city, but beyond area 1-3 the Material Plane begins to overlap with the dreamscape that Gil'Mâridth's presence pervades.

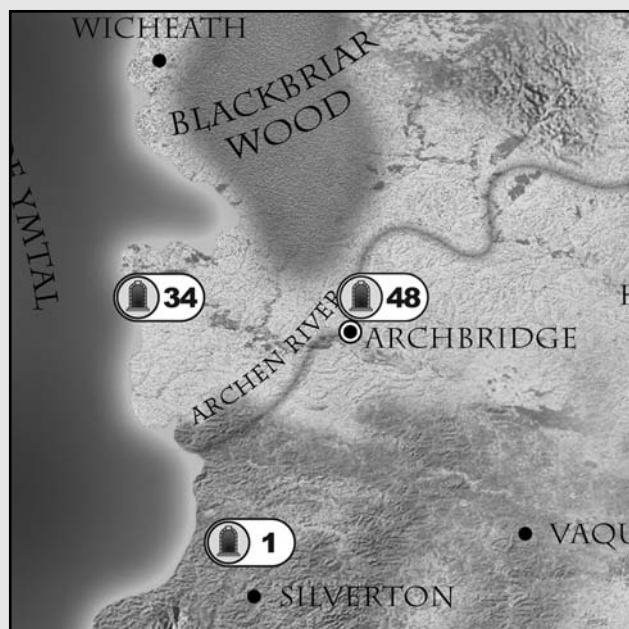
All of the treasures and weapons – with some notable exceptions – found beyond the shrine in area 1-2 have been ported over via magic into the Dream. Therefore they can be carried back out again in the possession of the PCs.

The spiraling stairwell that connects areas 1-1a through 1-7 is a gradual descent. If a fight spills into this stairwell from any of the rooms, attackers on higher ground gain a +1 circumstance bonus on melee attacks. The stairwell corridors are 10 ft. high, and unless otherwise noted, the rooms are 15 ft. high.

Superior Masonry Wall: Hardness 8; hp 90 hp; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

DCC World

Lord Eriq Darvyn and his cursed family call the glorious city of Archbridge their home. Summer Court to the Emperor of Crieste, Archbridge is also host to the mighty Imperial Army.



Player Beginning

When they meet with him, Lord Eriq Darvyn will be direct with the PCs. If they can bring his crisis to a satisfying and swift end, he is offering 30,000 gold pieces **or** a Darvyn family heirloom: a greenstone *amulet of natural armor* +4, which was given to his family generations ago by a grateful Xulmec priest of the Southlands for some long-forgotten deed.

When the PCs have agreed to his offer and have equipped themselves, Lord Eriq brings them to Frederic's room. The nobleman's nerves are frayed, and his voice is weak from lack of sleep. As he leads them through his stately manor, he explains that two adventuring parties have already turned down the job after running, terrified, from Frederic's closet. With that preface, read or paraphrase the intro text in area 1-1.

The Nightmare Closet

There are no random encounters in this dungeon. If the PCs stop and try to rest anywhere between areas 1-2 and 1-8, they will find that they cannot sleep or rest (for purposes of preparing new spells). By traveling into the Dream, they are already sleeping for all intents and purposes, although they can sustain injury and will retain any such wounds when leaving again. On the plus side, they cannot be fatigued or exhausted by any means in such areas.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – The Bedroom: Read or paraphrase the following:

You stand within a wide bedroom no less opulent than the rest of the manor's many rooms. A lush burgundy carpet spans the floor, and a four-poster bed lies centered against the far wall. Within, a skinny boy lies swaddled with blankets, his face ashen. Frederic's eyes are closed, his body deceptively still. Only a faint smile upon his lips suggests that he is alive at all. Golden sunlight and cheerful birdsong drift in from a pair of opened windows on the east wall, belying the solemn mood of the household. On the left-hand wall, a full-sized mirror is affixed to the wall next to the boy's dresser.

Lord Eriq points to a set of closet doors on the far wall. They are ornately carved, simple in design; and painted an unblemished white.

"It's there," he says weakly. "The secret door is inside."

There is nothing truly amiss in this chamber except for the closet itself.

If anyone wishes to examine young Frederic, Lord Eriq will protest, but a Diplomacy check (DC 15) will placate him. Frederic cannot be awakened by any means at this point, but a Search check (DC 12) will reveal that his fingernails have grown rather sharp. A successful Heal check (DC 10) made to assess his condition reveals the same, as well as determining that he is sleeping peacefully, his body stable. He appears to be in no immediate physical danger.

Lord Eriq explains that he will wait in this room until they return.

Area 1-1A – The Closet: Read or paraphrase the following:

This large closet appears to be nothing more than the wardrobe of a nobleman's son. Clothes for all occasions hang upon metal wracks, and old and discarded toys and stuffed animals lay strewn about the floor. A narrow door in the fine wood paneling across the closet stands partially open – yet something is horribly wrong about it, or what it hides, an elusive sense of cruelty and pain. Beyond it you can see a shadowed stairwell disappears below.

Whenever someone steps within 5 ft. of the secret door itself, he or she must make a successful Will save (DC 18) or become frightened for 1d10 minutes due to the aura of terror that guards Gil'Mâridth's shrine. The PCs are no exception, suffering a -2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks for the duration, but they can simply wait out the effects with no lasting harm.

The toys and stuffed animals are well loved, but have gathered a fine layer of dust, suggestive of how long Frederic has been unable to play with them. The secret door is easy to slide open and pass beyond, where the stairway quickly widens from 5 ft. to 10 ft. and begins its spiral descent.

Area 1-2 – The Shrine (EL 10): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the bottom of the curving stair you step into a strangely shaped chamber with an irregularly tiled floor. Atop a tiered dais in the center of the room is a cylindrical stone pedestal with a hole in the center. Carved into the sides of the pedestal are the graven images of fiends crawling amidst curling vapors. A great bas-relief upon the opposite wall depicts the very room you're standing in, though it is viewed from the opposite direction, so that the stairs you just entered from are seen as an exit in the background. A hooded figure is shown standing above the pedestal, placing a palm-sized gem in the hole.

Tacked to the left-hand wall in a strange pattern are countless pages of what appear to be letters.

Give the players handout A. This is the shrine to Gil'Mâridth that was created by the mansion's architect. The pedestal is intended for sacrificial offerings to the Torment *and* is the means to open the secret door.

Anyone who examines the pedestal can attempt to identify it as a shrine for Gil'Mâridth with a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15). Success reveals that the symbols refer to the evil goddess of nightmares, which may give the PCs a clue as to the nature of the environment to come. If *detect magic* is used in this chamber, the pedestal radiates an aura of faint evocation while the bas-relief on the wall possesses an aura of faint illusion.

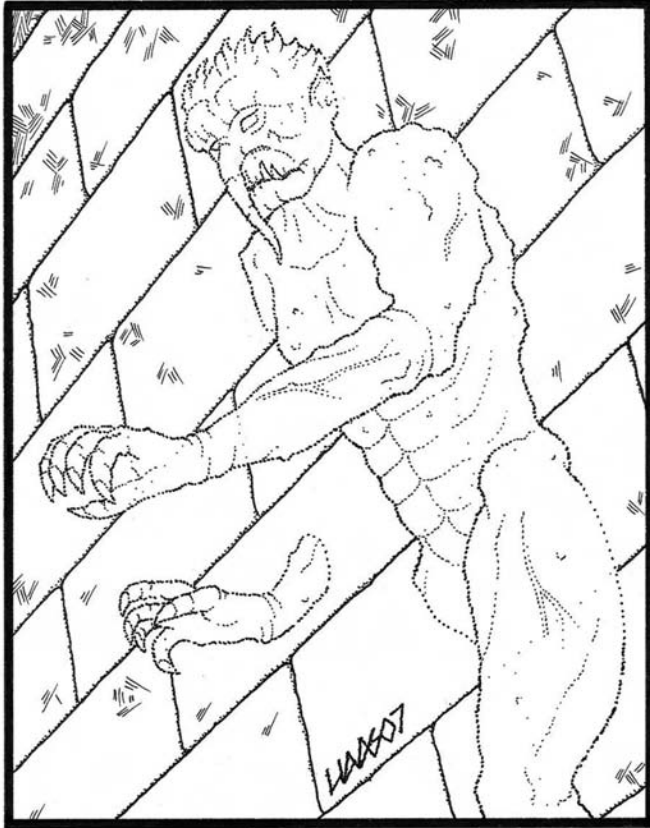
The pedestal and the bas-relief are a trap, meant to prompt intruders to attempt the obvious. If an object of value greater than 50 gp (such as, oh, a gem?) is placed upon the altar, a corkscrew-shaped blade spirals down from the ceiling above with supernatural speed and slices into the transgressing PC.

The only means of passing this chamber is finding (Search DC 30) and opening the secret door on the eastern wall, part of the bas-relief itself. The clues to its location are (1) the depiction of the chamber's western entrance, an open threshold with steps ascending beyond, and (2) a two-line rhyme that can be found within the pages on the wall. If the PCs cannot find the door, the rhyme is their best bet.

If anyone inspects these papers on the wall, they will find them to be letters written in a beautiful, flowing script. They appear to address young Frederic, and were written by his favorite aunt, Silana. The letters seem innocuous enough, but if a PC reads through them all (taking about 30 minutes) and succeeds at a Sense Motive check (DC 15), he will discern an undercurrent of menace hidden in the letters' context. Words are delicately woven throughout the whole, just so, to form a spectrum of gruesome imagery. In addition, interspersed between the writings are a number of children's rhymes and songs – all of which are subtly disturbing.

While the cartography of the letters is beautiful to look at, many of the flowing characters end with a spiraling design. These letters were written by the night hag Sajarr and helped induce the nightmares that have given form to this dungeon.

Even casual perusal (no Search check needed) of all the letters will reveal that the final letter contains a disembodied, two-lined rhyme in bolded script:



When Sadie sought to peer beyond what lucid veillings hid,

She stood beneath the spiral stair and down its railing slid.

With this clue, any of the PCs who stand “beneath the spiral stair” depicted in the bas-relief will be able to find the secret door more easily (Search check DC 20). Opening it is merely a matter of pushing precisely within the door’s outlines.

Development: Upon entering this room, the PCs will only have 3 rounds before they hear a horrid screeching sound from above, followed by loud, metallic slam: the secret door through which they just passed at the top of the steps in area 1-1A has just been shut. As soon as they entered the dungeon and set off down the stairs, an oneiric troll – a creature composed of dreamstuff – materialized and sequestered the shrine within the Dream. (Only defeating Frederic in area 1-8 will open the secret door again.)

Tactics: 2 rounds after the door slams shut, the oneiric troll enters the room. Ordinarily, servants of Gil’Mâridh would attempt to subdue their enemies – the better to torture them – but the need to protect Frederic has shifted priorities. The troll aims to kill, and she will lurch into the room with murderous intent, attacking the nearest PC without discrimination.

Spiral Blade Trap: CR 6; mechanical; location/touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +12 melee (2d8+8, blade); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 28.

Treasure: A hidden compartment within the pedestal (Search DC 18) contains, ironically, a *lens of detection* placed here by the meticulous – and insane – architect of Darvyn Manor.

Oneiric Troll Ftr2: CR 9; Large outsider (dream); HD 6d8+36 plus 2d10+12; hp 79; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grp +16; Atk claw +11 melee (1d6+6); Full Atk 2 claws +11 melee (1d6+6) and bite +6 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Phantasmal strike, rend 2d6+9; SQ Darkvision 90 ft., doubt vulnerability, ephemeral, low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Listen +7, Spot +7; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Track.

SA – Phantasmal Strike (Ex): Twice per day, the oneiric troll can make a devastating attack that belies its strength and speed. It can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra damage equal to twice its total HD (16 points of damage) against a single foe. If the oneiric troll’s foe makes a successful DC 15 Will save, the attack is disbelieved and no damage is suffered.

Rend (Ex): If an oneiric troll hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent’s body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+9 points of damage.

SQ – Doubt Vulnerability (Ex): If an opponent is somehow made aware of the oneiric troll’s phantasmal nature, he can attempt to disbelieve it as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, as long as he has line of sight on her. If he succeeds on a DC 15 Will save, he deals 1d8 points of damage to the oneiric creature.

Ephemeral (Ex): When the oneiric troll reaches 0 hit points, all traces of its body (including blood or other vitals) dissipate as though it never was. Additionally, half of all ability score or hit point damage dealt by the oneiric troll returns at the rate of 1 hit point or ability score point per round. For example, a fighter who suffered 12 points of damage from the oneiric troll would be restored 1 hit point per round for 6 rounds following her death. Characters slain by the oneiric troll do not, however, return from death.

Fearless (Ex): The oneiric troll knows that it is ephemeral in the waking world and cannot be intimidated or persuaded. It is immune to all mind-affecting spells and effects.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal

damage to an oneiric troll. If it loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. It can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Area 1-3 – The Spiral Stair: Read or paraphrase the following:

A smooth metal railing begins at this point as the stairwell spirals steadily downward. The moment the PCs have stepped onto the stairs at this location, they have placed one foot into the Dream. Roll a secret check for PCs who possess either Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes). A successful check at DC 13 will allow them to sense the phantasmagorical atmosphere that they are entering. Even if the check is failed, allow another after each successive room.

Whenever a check is succeeded, read or paraphrase the following:

The walls, floor, and ceiling around you feel oddly surreal, as though you are entering a pocket dimension. Somehow you're not entirely convinced what you perceive around you is entirely real.

Despite this inclination, no amount of disbelieving can affect the Dream. It is not mere illusion; this is a very real place, though it exists in a transcendental consciousness. However, this knowledge may clue the PC into the fact that even death here isn't entirely final. In lieu of a Knowledge check, a Spot check (DC 20) can alert a PC that something is amiss, but the sensation is intangible and hard to define.

Area 1-4 – Coiled Death (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

You look upon a chamber strewn with black ropes and thick, vine-like cords. Some are thin like twine, while others are impossibly large, fit only for the tallest of giants. One such rope has braids more than a foot thick. All of them are long, some knotted together seemingly at random or haphazardly entwined, while the largest coils tower high near the corners of the room. Only a small section of the floor can be seen, forming an uneven path to a portal on the opposite wall.

When he was 5, Frederic accompanied his father to one of the city's shipyards. He wandered off on his own and fell into a storage cellar filled with huge coils of rope – normally used for long-line fishing. The fall and the darkness spooked young Frederic, making the vast coils of rope around him more ominous. This latent fear eventually birthed a solid phobia within him – and has now spawned this chamber.

Lying within the tangled nest of ropes and lashes is a dark naga (noted as **N** on the map). A successful Spot check (DC 20) is required to notice the naga hidden among the coils. Once a creature of noble lineage in the ancient world, this naga transcended mortal life and was given immortal form in the world of dreams. Now she slithers from nightmare to nightmare, menacing ophidiophobes. Recently, she discovered Frederic's fear of rope and has made a nest for herself.

If any PC strays from the clear path in the room, the ropes will respond immediately by entwining about their legs to arrest movement. Every round, a character must make a DC 14 Reflex save or become entangled. An entangled character moves at half speed, cannot run or charge, and takes a -2 penalty on all attack rolls and a -4 penalty to Dexterity. Any entangled characters that attempt to cast a spell must make a Concentration check (15 + the spell's level) or lose the spell.

Tactics: As soon as the PCs enter the area, the naga uses her omnipresent *detect thoughts* ability to assess her enemies. When the PC she perceives as physically strongest is within her reach (5 ft.), she will strike, hoping to weaken the PC with her venom. The power of Gil'Mâridth has stripped the naga of her sorcerer spells but has enhanced her strength and altered her poison ability (as described below). If a PC is affected by her venom, the dark naga will make liberal use of her sneak attack ability against him.

If at least two PCs become entangled simultaneously, two of the giant-sized ropes (noted as **R** on the map) lurch to life as animated objects to attack those who are *not* yet entangled.

Treasure: When the naga and the giant ropes are slain, the remaining ropes and coils will lie still. If the PCs search the room (Search DC 18, though due to the thick tangles of rope, it takes 3 rounds to search any given 5-foot-by-5-foot space), they will find the naga's only egg and a *rope of climbing*. To collectors, the dark naga egg would fetch 1,000 gp. However, clerics of dream gods (such as Æ or Gil'Mâridth) who are given a chance to study the egg and discern its properties would offer up to 5,000 gp for its purchase. Alternatively, if the egg (2 lbs.) is grasped, the wielder receives a +1 enhancement bonus on saves to resist mind-affecting spells. An *identify* spell or a Spellcraft check (DC 30) is required to notice this effect.

Altered dark naga: CR 8; Large aberration; HD 9d8+18; hp 63; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +12; Atk sting +8 melee (2d4+3 plus poison); Full Atk sting +8 melee

(2d4+3 plus poison) and bite +3 melee (1d4+1); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison, sneak attack +1d6; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., detect thoughts, guarded thoughts, immunity to poison, resistance to charm; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Intimidate +5, Listen +11, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +12, Spot +11; Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Lightning Reflexes.

SA – Poison (Ex): The nightmare-haunted sleep that a dark naga's venom induces in a victim does not apply within this dreamlike environment because the victim is, effectively, already dreaming. Instead, the victim must make a DC 18 Will save or become shaken (-2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks) with nightmarish visions for 2d4 minutes. Additionally, the victim is effectively flanked for the duration, believing that ghostly attackers threaten him from all sides.

Sneak attack (Ex): This dark naga can make a sneak attack like a rogue, dealing an extra 1d6 points of damage whenever a foe is denied his or her Dexterity bonus, or when the naga is flanking.

SQ – Detect Thoughts (Su): A dark naga can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 9th; Will DC 15 negates). This ability is always active.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex): Dark nagas are immune to any form of mind reading.

Resistance to Charm: Dark nagas have a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects (not included in the statistics block).

Possessions: *Periapt of Mâridth*.

Giant Rope (2): CR 3; Large construct; HD 4d10+30; hp 50; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grapple +10; Atk/Full Atk Slam +5 melee (1d8+4); Space/Reach 10 ft./10

ft.; SA Constrict 1d8+4; SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 2, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will –4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: None

Constrict (Ex): A giant rope deals 1d8+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a creature of Huge size or smaller. It can also make constriction attacks against multiple creatures at once, if they all are size Small or smaller.

Area 1-5 – The Playroom (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

A wide chamber painted in monochrome hues of blue opens before you. The colors are soft pastels, and if the room were not lit only with a single, sputtering lantern, hanging overhead, it might present a cheerful ambience. As it is, the glad-some mood is spoiled by a pool of blood near the center of the room, and the remains of what appears to be the body of some kind of brown-furred animal. Four columns, spiraled with red and white lines, support a ceiling you cannot see.

Many children harbor a fear of clowns, and Frederic is no exception. The lingering memory of an overweight harlequin he saw at the city's most recent carnival has summoned the monstrosity lairing in this chamber. Once the PCs have stepped into the room, its occupant will reveal itself from behind one of the columns: Guffaw, a hideous ogre of otherworldly design. Once he stalked the nightmares of children across the Empire of Crieste, feeding on their collective coulrophobia. Now he guards Gil'Mâridth's next chosen messiah. Read or paraphrase the following:

A porcine ogre, easily ten feet in height, towers over you with a malicious grin. His teeth are sharp and numerous, layered thick like a

Periapt of Mâridth

A *periapt of Mâridth* is a stylish platinum armband, with curling tips that spiral into the holy symbol of the Torment. These insidious devices are beneficial to her cultists, but can be harmful to the unlearned and unwary. While the *periapt* grants its wearer strength of will, it also makes her easier to find for cultists of Mâridth.

Anyone who wears a *periapt of Mâridth* is granted a +2 enhancement bonus on Will saves. Additionally, clerics of Gil'Mâridth of 5th level or higher can discern the wearer's presence and location as if they had cast *locate creature* as a 10th level caster. The effect is constant, making it easy for senior members of the Torment's clergy to find fellow cultists or stolen *periapts*. A *periapt* that is not worn, however, cannot be located in this way.

If the *periapt* has *identify* cast on it or is similarly examined, the examiner must succeed on a Will save DC 16 to discern the *locate creature* function. A *periapt of Mâridth* is considered a bracer for purposes of how many magic items a character can use.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *locate creature*, *magic aura*, *owl's wisdom*; Price 2,000 gp.

shark's, and his face is painted with the garish colors of a carnival harlequin. Dirty, lank hair, dyed bright blue, spills over his shoulders. His considerable girth can barely contain the skin-tight white costume he wears, spreading wide the suit's many bloodstains. In one gnarled fist he holds a heavy, scepter-like device capped with the silvery head of a many-toothed jester.

"Was I make too much noise?" he asks with a rumble as he hefts the scepter like a weapon.

Tactics: Guffaw will attack almost immediately, using his scepter like a greatclub. He will attack lightly armored PCs first; focusing his attacks on those he perceives must be spellcasters. Guffaw will attempt to feint in combat (utilizing his Bluff skill) in order to use his sneak attack.

Treasure: In one shadowed corner, a large toy chest (proportioned to the ogre) hangs open. It is brightly painted with goggle eyes and a wide, fanged smile – prompting jaded PCs to expect a mimic – but it is quite harmless. Within they will find a bloodstained bag (containing 380 gp and 13 pp), two pouches that contain *dust of illusion* and *dust of tracelessness*, and a disguise kit (which grants a +3 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks, but its bright colors allow only for clownish disguises). In addition, there is a book of drawings made by Guffaw, depicting colorful, childlike drawings of murder. If any character of good alignment actually peruses the entire book, he must make a Will save (DC 12) or become shaken for 1d20 minutes from the disturbing imagery.

Guffaw, ogre Rog5: CR 7; Large giant; HD 4d8+8 plus 5d6+10; hp 80; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk +1 *masticating greatclub* +12 melee (2d8+8 plus 1d6 masticating); Full Atk +1 *masticating greatclub* +12/+7 melee (2d8+8 plus 1d6 masticating); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Induce laughter, sneak attack +3d6; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., evasion, low-light vision, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Balance +5, Bluff +7, Climb +9, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Escape Artist +4, Hide +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +12, Listen +5, Move Silently +2, Perform (comedy) +6, Search +2, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +5, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5; Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

SA – Induce laughter (Su): Combating Guffaw instills in his enemies a supernatural mania. Every three rounds (beginning on round 3), all opponents he threatens (he has reach!) must make a DC 16

Will save or suffer the effects of *hideous laughter* with a duration of 2 rounds.

Possessions: +1 *masticating greatclub*.

Area 1-6 – The Gullet (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

The corridor before you begins to arc gradually to the right. Thick, two-foot-long wedges protrude from the walls and floor, bone white in color, each one narrowing to a sharp point. They are arrayed in an uneven, layered pattern, like the jaws of a massive shark or dinosaur. As you draw nearer to the disturbing passage, you notice the color of the walls fades from the dark gray of stone to the lurid red of living tissue.

Frederic, like many children, is inherently frightened by the scary sharp teeth of storybook monsters. The ever-present fear has coalesced into this gauntlet of massive teeth. Each tooth has hardness 7 and 20 hit points. Despite their appearance, the teeth are no threat by themselves. They do not move without prompting, and the PCs can easily avoid them if they walk by casually.

The true threat of this giant gullet is evident only when combat begins – an unfortunate inevitability, as the ghouls that lurk around the bend will attack the PCs on sight. As minions of Gil'Mâridth, they have come to the dungeon via divine magic to guard this final approach. The two brothers – Rozlep and Pelzor – were trained in the deadly, ascetic arts before giving their lives for the unholy glory of the Torment.

When combat begins, the teeth begin to jerk in and out in an erratic, chewing motion (the walls themselves do not move). Even this would be easy enough to avoid under normal circumstances, but the exertion of combat makes it difficult. For every round of combat that a character begins in a

Masticating Weapons

A masticating weapon contains a small, biting mouth somewhere along its weighted end. The sharp teeth of this mouth inflict an additional 1d6 points of damage with every strike. Whenever the weapons scores a critical hit, the very act of tearing the it away from the target inflicts an additional 2d6 points of damage (in addition to damage from the critical hit). Masticating weapons tend to mutter and croon constantly, imposing a -2 penalty on the wielder's Move Silently checks, although they have no intelligence. Only bludgeoning weapons can be masticating.

Moderate evocation; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *magic mouth*, *magic weapon*; Price +2 bonus

toothed space (as marked on the map), she must make a DC 15 Reflex save or a Tumble check (DC 15). Failure results in 1d4 points of piercing damage. For every move into another toothed space, she must make the save or check again or take another 1 point of damage. Anyone who falls prone in a toothed space automatically suffers 1d6 points of damage (no save). As soon as combat ends, the teeth grow still and are once again avoidable.

Tactics: The ghoulish brothers will use every unarmed maneuver they can to trip or grapple their foes onto the toothed spaces. Consequently, they will only attempt to bite or claw (and thereby paralyze) if the PCs prove difficult to grapple or trip; they want only to impale the PCs upon the walls and floor. The ghouls are not themselves exempt from the lacerating teeth, but being monks, they are particularly good at dodging them. If given the opportunity, one of them will Tumble to the other side of the party to surround them within the gullet.

Pelzor and Rozlep, Ghoul Mnk 5: CR 6; Medium undead; HD 2d12 plus 5d8; hp 35; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 21, touch 19, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +10; Atk unarmed strike +6 melee (1d8+2) or bite +6 melee (1d6+2 plus paralysis); Full Atk unarmed strike +5/+5 melee (1d8+1) and bite +4 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis) or bite +6 melee (1d6+1 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +4 melee (1d3+1 plus paralysis); SA Ghoul fever, paralysis; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., evasion, ki strike (magic), purity of body, slow fall 20 ft., undead traits; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 20, Con –, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +12, Climb +7, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +3, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Jump +13, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Tumble +12, Use Rope +5 (+7 with bindings); Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Multiattack.

SA – *Ghoul Fever (Su)*: Disease - bite, Fortitude DC 14, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.

Possessions: Filthy robes, holy symbols of Gil'Mâridh – which require a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check to identify.

Area 1-7 – The Returning Closet: Read or paraphrase the following:

You step into a strangely familiar room, which you quickly realize is, in fact, a closet. Rotted clothes, sized for a young man, hang from metal racks. Broken, neglected toys and moldy stuffed animals are scattered about the floor. Only moments after you enter the closet you hear the muffled laughter of a man's voice beyond the closet doors on the far wall. Pale red light shines through slits in the door.

This chamber is an exact, if disturbing replica of area 1-1A, only the PCs are entering it from a secret door at the bottom of the spiraling stair. Since the PCs have recently passed through a secret door just like it, it's particularly easy to locate this one (Search DC 10).

Development: Once the PCs have entered this closet, the "false" Frederic in area 1-8 will begin casting spells to prepare for the coming fight (beginning with the spells noted with asterisks). If the PCs have not moved on from this room in approximately 3 rounds, they will hear the voice of Frederic in area 1-8 call out to them in a singsong voice, beginning with the following:

*Listen, children; gather 'round.
Slip from your beds without a sound.
Take my hands and you will see
Every little thing your dreams can be.*

This rhyming begins Frederic's bard song (inspire courage +1). If the PCs tarry for 3 rounds longer (time which is best spent preparing for the final confrontation!), the closet doors will swing open of their own accord, revealing the room beyond. Also during these rounds, Frederic will prepare himself with the spell-like abilities granted by his weapon.

Treasure: If the PCs think to search among the rotted garments, they will find a *cloak of Charisma* +2 hanging at one end of a metal rack.

Area 1-8 – Heart of the Nightmares (EL 8; variable): Read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourself stepping back into Frederic's bedroom once again, but it doesn't fool you for a moment. While the dimensions and furniture in the opulent bedchamber are quite the same, the colors are all wrong. Where there was a pair of double doors leading to the rest of the house, you see instead a gaping portal beyond which a thick red mist roils and swirls. Even as you watch, dark shapes stir the mist just beyond the threshold.

Florid purple light shines through the windows

on the left. Through the panes of glass, you can see the world beyond – but there is no sign of the city in which the Darvyn Manor resides...only a bleak scrubland with a hellish, violet-hued sky. In the distance, black twisters stalk the horizon, while closer to the estate ragged figures in black rove the dusty grounds.

Standing atop the four-poster bed is a young man who would resemble Frederic himself if he were coming of age. Armored in gleaming silver chain, he brandishes a two-pronged trident of violet-hued metal that verily leaks with profane power.

Give the players handout B. Within this chamber – which exists firmly in the Dream on the fringes of Gil'Mâridth's domain – lies the source of the Darvyn family's woe. Here Frederic's nightmares have both strengthened and aged him. Within this dream, Frederic is a young man and a cleric of the Great Hag herself. If he goes unchallenged, his waking self will grow to embody this prophetic vision: evil, powerful, and utterly devoted to Gil'Mâridth and her

Frederic's Song

Dramatic GMs are encouraged to run with Messianic Frederic's bardic mania. Even during battle, he will sing out the creepy nursery rhymes taught to him by the night hag Sajarr. Here are a number of stanzas that begin his song.

*Listen, children; gather 'round.
Slip from your beds without a sound.
Take my hands and you will see
Every little thing your dreams can be.
First, for blessings, kneel and pray
For help from above in any way.
Then, grip tight your blankets dear,
And by the stars your ship we'll steer.
Off we go to dreaming land
Where you're in charge, you understand.
Any little things your hearts desire
Can be yours, should you enquire
But careful what you wish for, dears,
For dreams well know your deepest fears.
The sweetness that you dream tonight
Can sour with the flutter of candlelight.
So come now, children; see what I've found!
Climb aboard my merry-go-round!
We'll spin and twirl in a downward spiral!
Nothing can stop us in our dream-bound, gyral
Escapade in dreaming land
Now I'm in charge, you understand!
The first stop is the Endless Gyre
And you won't come back, should you expire...*

desire to draw all mortal souls into her fold. Only the PCs can put a stop her plans for young Frederic before he grows too powerful to challenge directly.

The threshold on the south wall leads to the nightmarish reflection of Darvyn Manor. Already Frederic's "dream self" has tormented his own family with his burgeoning powers. The PCs cannot cross this threshold by any means, which is just as well; the hellish minions of Gil'Mâridth stalk the red mists beyond and would surely tear the PCs apart.

If any of the PCs actively state that they wish to examine the world outside more closely through the windows, one of the "roving figures" will stop and lock eyes with the PC. These figures are the souls of mortals given over to the auspices of Gil'Mâridth. They are madness personified; to look upon them invites a small measure of that madness. Only seconds after meeting its eyes, the creature itself appears just behind the glass in the window, grasping the sides of the house with sucker-like fingers. The PC must make a DC 14 Will save or be shaken for 1 hour. If the PC fails this save by 10, he must make another save. Failure results in *insanity*, as per the spell. Fortunately, the glass cannot be broken, which keeps PCs beyond the creature's reach.

The only thing the PCs must contend with in this room is Frederic. This is not truly the boy himself, however; this is who he will become in the waking world if the PCs do not defeat him now. In this manifestation, he is only a mid-level cleric, but he wields *Terror*, an artifact of Gil'Mâridth that makes him much more dangerous than he should be.

In the Dream: This chamber exists fully within the Dream. Hence the laws that reign here are not those that reign in the waking world. As soon as the PCs step into the room, they will feel their coordination in flux. Here, each PC's Charisma or Wisdom modifier (whichever is better) replaces her Strength modifier, and vice versa. Stalwart fighters or barbarians may find that their weapons and armor grow heavier, while charismatic bards or clerics will find themselves feeling stronger and more confident. At the GM's option, psionic-using characters may also substitute their Strength with their Intelligence (if it is higher than their Wisdom or Charisma).

Development: Frederic will taunt the PCs, even as he sings his bardic song (a disturbing paean celebrating the tribulation of innocents), allowing them to make the first move. But if they hesitate too long, he *will* attack. After all, they threaten his future as the next messiah of the Cult of Mâridth. Although he has spells he can call upon, Frederic will utilize the *mirror image* effect of *Terror* immediately and use

the weapon's pain-dealing properties liberally against them. While standing on the bed, which has hardened to volcanic glass, Frederic gains a +1 circumstance bonus for higher ground. Frederic enjoys the benefits of a *heroism* spell as long as he holds *Terror*, and his stat block has been adjusted to reflect this.

Frederic will attack a single PC (using the *deathwatch* spell-like ability granted by *Terror* to gauge the most likely to fall) relentlessly until he falls unconscious or dies. Doing so calls into play the phantasmagorical nature of the Dream itself. One round after a PC drops unconscious, dying, or dead, the other PCs will see the fallen PC's reflec-

tion in the mirror stand up and step through the mirror...and attack!

This reflection is a deadringer, an evil manifestation of a PC. As a servant of the Torment, the deadringer will fight to defend (or avenge) Frederic. Resembling the fallen PC that spawned it, it fights with a maniacal gleam in its yellow-glowing eyes and wide grin on its face.

Treasure: As all of Messianic Frederic's possessions will disappear with his defeat (see below), the only real treasure to be found is beneath the bed. A Search check (DC 20) reveals a loose floorboard, under which can be found a *ring of counterspells* in a hidden compartment.

Deadringers

Existing only within the Dream, deadringers are servants of Gil'Mâridth. Composed of malevolent dreamstuff, they are spawned whenever a waking mind loses consciousness (life) within the Dream. Deadringers work much like a template (suitable for any creature type), but simpler still.

The deadringer has the same statistics (and equipment) as the character, as well as hit points equal to the PC's maximum hit point total. However, it is moderately weaker than its counterpart, possessing three negative levels as follows. It suffers a -3 penalty on all skill checks and ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. It loses three effective levels or Hit Dice; if it is a spellcaster, it loses one spell slot of the highest level of spells its counterpart can cast and, if applicable, one prepared spell of that level. Although the deadringer can cast any spells that its counterpart had available at the time of his incapacitation, it cannot cast any spells with the good descriptor. The CR for a deadringer is the character's level -3.

Deadringers possess all the knowledge of the character it resembles, and can use this to its advantage by striking at the enemies it knows to be the most vulnerable. GMs may even allow cooperative players to take control of the deadringer as a temporary NPC, rewarding them a small measure of XP (50-100) if they do so convincingly. How often does a player get a free chance to fight his fellow players without consequence?

When a deadringer is slain, its body vanishes altogether. Additionally, the counterpart that spawned it cannot be revived while the deadringer still stands. If another PC falls unconscious, dying, or dead during the fight, another deadringer will spawn, and so on.

Terror

Terror is an artifact created at the behest of Gil'Mâridth herself, intended to serve her chosen messiahs. Forged of adamantine by a dwarven blacksmith who took his own life after its completion, it was carried by cultists of the Torment into the Dream and there laden with unholy powers. Servants of Gil'Mâridth are not yet finished with it, but already it is a powerful tool for her employ. Soon it will be ready to return to the Material Plane.

A wicked, two-pronged weapon of violet-tinted adamantine, Terror is a +5 *unholy returning trident* that sends waves of agony through the bodies of its victims. Aside from the 2d6 damage it inflicts upon all creatures of good alignment, it also inflicts 2d6 points of nonlethal damage to anyone it strikes (of any alignment), even if damage reduction absorbs any lethal damage. This effect is meant to subdue opponents first, leaving them at the mercy of Terror's wielder.

In addition, Terror allows its wielder to utilize the following spell-like abilities:

2/day – *mirror image* (caster level 10th).

At will – *deathwatch*, *heroism* (constant effect).

Strong necromancy; CL 20th; Weight 5 lb.

Messianic Frederic, Clr5/Brd2: CR 8; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d8+5 plus 2d6+2; hp 55; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk/Full Atk +5 *unholy returning trident* +16 melee (1d6+9 plus 2d6 nonlethal damage plus 2d6 against good-aligned creatures) or +5 *unholy returning trident* +14 ranged (1d6+9 plus 2d6 nonlethal damage plus 2d6 against good-aligned creatures); SA Rebuke undead 1/day (+6, 2d6+9); SQ Bardic knowledge +4, countersong 2/day, fascinate 2/day, innocent aspect, inspire courage 2/day (+1); AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +10, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (history) +7, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Perform (sing) +9, Spellcraft +6, Tumble +3, Survival +4 (+6 on other planes); Dodge, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (trident), Weapon Focus (trident).

Innocence Aspect (Su): When Frederic reaches 3 hit points or less, his body returns to the size and age of his waking self, that of an 8-year-old boy. His possessions (including the artifact *Terror*) disappear and he falls unconscious and cannot be healed or awakened.

Bard spells Known (3/1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0 – *daze, ghost sound, message, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st – *cure light wounds, hideous laughter*.

Cleric spells prepared (5/4+1/3+1/2+1; save DC 14 + spell level; Domains: Luck, Trickery): 0 – *detect magic, guidance, light, resistance, virtue*; 1st – *cure light wounds, doom, entropic shield^D, protection from good, shield of faith**; 2nd – *bear's endurance, bull's strength*, invisibility^D, owl's wisdom**; 3rd – *dispel magic, magic circle against good, protection from energy^D*. D: Domain Spell.

Possessions: *Terror* (+5 *unholy returning trident*), +2 chain shirt, locked gauntlet, ring of protection +4, holy symbol of Gil'Mâridth.

Conclusion and Rewards

Ending the threat to the waking Frederic and the Darvyn family is not simply a matter of killing his dream double. There are two ways this adventure can end, and XP can be rewarded accordingly. If the Messianic Frederic is defeated either way, the PCs will find they can walk back up the spiraling stair and the secret door in area 1-1A will be open once again. At that point, the secret door in area 1-2 becomes sealed.

If the PCs slay the Messianic Frederic (he is brought to -10 hit points), the real Frederic's grim fate is merely postponed. When the PCs return to area 1-1, they will find the boy has emerged from his coma and is free of

illness. The nightmares appear to have ended. Lord Eriq will be grateful and give the PCs their reward. However, Frederic's experience has traumatized him and he has become mute. Eventually Lord Eriq will take him to Archbridge Asylum for long-term care. Reward the PCs 2,000 XP for this outcome.

If the PCs defeat the Messianic Frederic but do not kill him, their act of mercy averts the real Frederic's grim fate entirely. If the PCs attempt to bring the body of Messianic Frederic back to his father, the body will vanish altogether once they reach area 1-2. Either way, when the PCs return to area 1-1, the boy Frederic will be awake, free of Gil'Mâridth's administrations and the nightmares. His father tearfully thanks the PCs for "whatever they did." Because of his recent nightmares, he really doesn't want to know the details. He only wants to know if Frederic is safe for good. He rewards the PCs as promised and will remain a steadfast ally in the future. Reward the PCs 3,000 XP for this outcome.

Further Adventures

Even if Frederic is safe, the matter is not yet fully resolved. There is still the matter of Sajarr, the night hag, who has replaced – and is masquerading as – Lord Eriq's own unmarried elder sister, Lady Silana Darvyn. In an attempt to keep his family safe, Eriq has unwittingly sent his wife and four daughters to Sajarr's keeping! The night hag has already begun haunting their dreams personally and ensuring help cannot arrive to investigate their waning health.

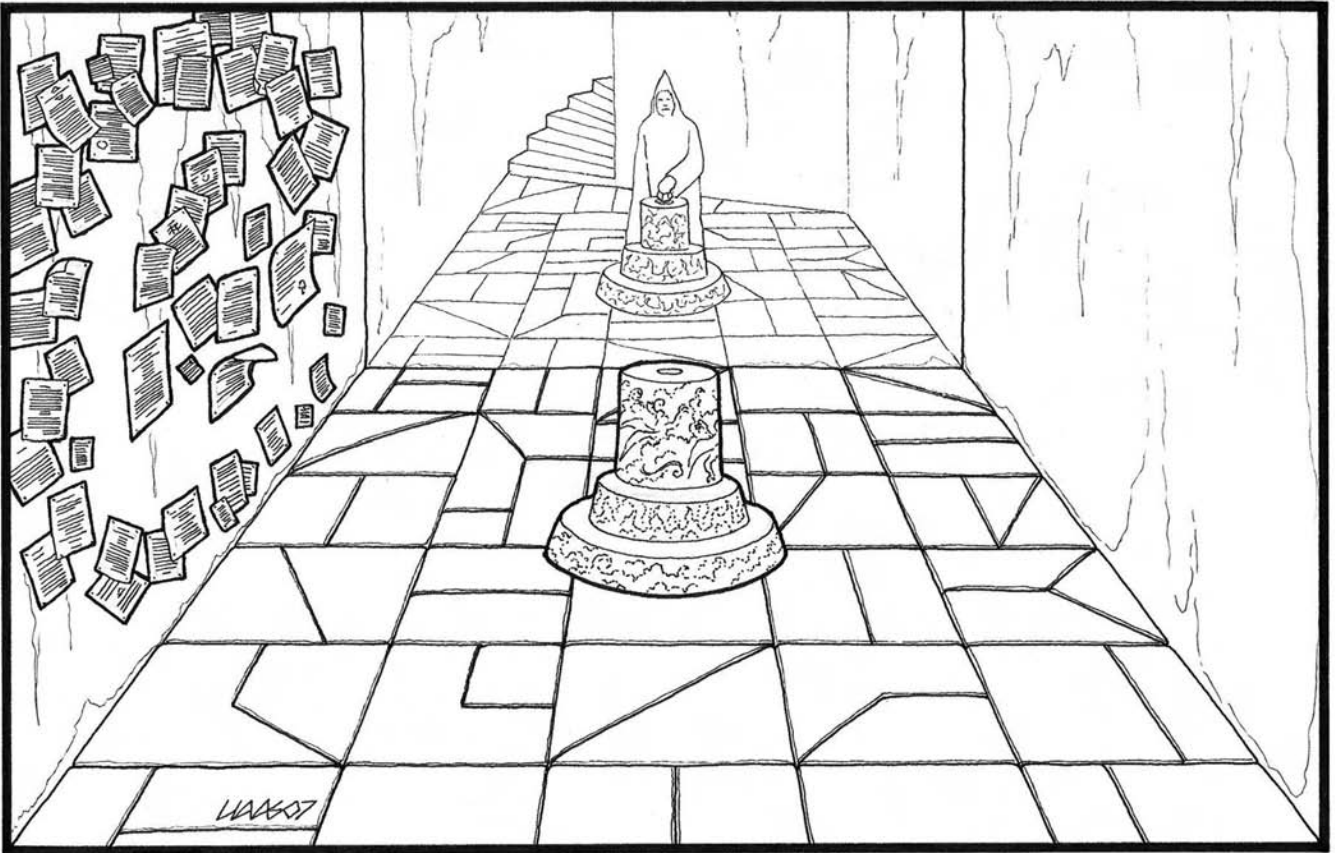
If Frederic was freed from Gil'Mâridth's grasp, Sajarr will wisely disappear after the rest of the Darvyn family is dead, setting off on her next mission in the service of the Torment: traveling to where the artifact *Terror* will soon appear in the Material Plane. The PCs can also hear rumor of this dread weapon's existence and will invariably contend with Sajarr if they seek it out. Frederic, for his part, will very likely grow up to become a follower of Ôæ, becoming a very valuable ally in the crusade against her machinations.

If Frederic was taken to the asylum, Gil'Mâridth orders Sajarr to maintain her hold on the family and watch over the boy. The Torment hasn't given up on him yet. Her touch was diminished but not removed. Sajarr continues to prey upon the Darvyn family, and she will eliminate them one by one and eventually come to Archbridge herself to be near her young charge. When the first of Lord Eriq's daughters dies from Sajarr's nocturnal hauntings, one servant will escape the night hag's clutches and bring word to him. Lord Eriq will immediately seek out the PCs again!

No matter what happens, the PCs will have made an enemy of the Cult of Mâridth for their actions. At the same time, they will have garnered the attention of the

church of Ôæ. One of the orderlies in Archbridge Asylum, Excelsior, is a cleric of Ôæ, the benevolent god of dreams and imagination. The commitment of Lord Eriq's servant (who first discovered the secret door in Frederic's closet), or Frederic himself, has brought the situation to his attention. Excelsior will eventually approach the PCs and confide in them. He will tell them about Ôæ, Gil'Mâridth, and the Dream, and what their involvement means in the eternal, oneiric war. The GM is encouraged to use these NPCs to plan future adventures.

If any of the PCs were slain during this adventure and not carried back to area 1-1, the GM may allow them to yet survive. In the waking world, the body has been relocated – most likely nearby, in the sewers or catacombs beneath Archbridge, perhaps. Finding the body is the easy part. The hard part is finding another way to enter the Dream to retrieve the PC's soul from Gil'Mâridth's grasp, much as they had to free Frederic.

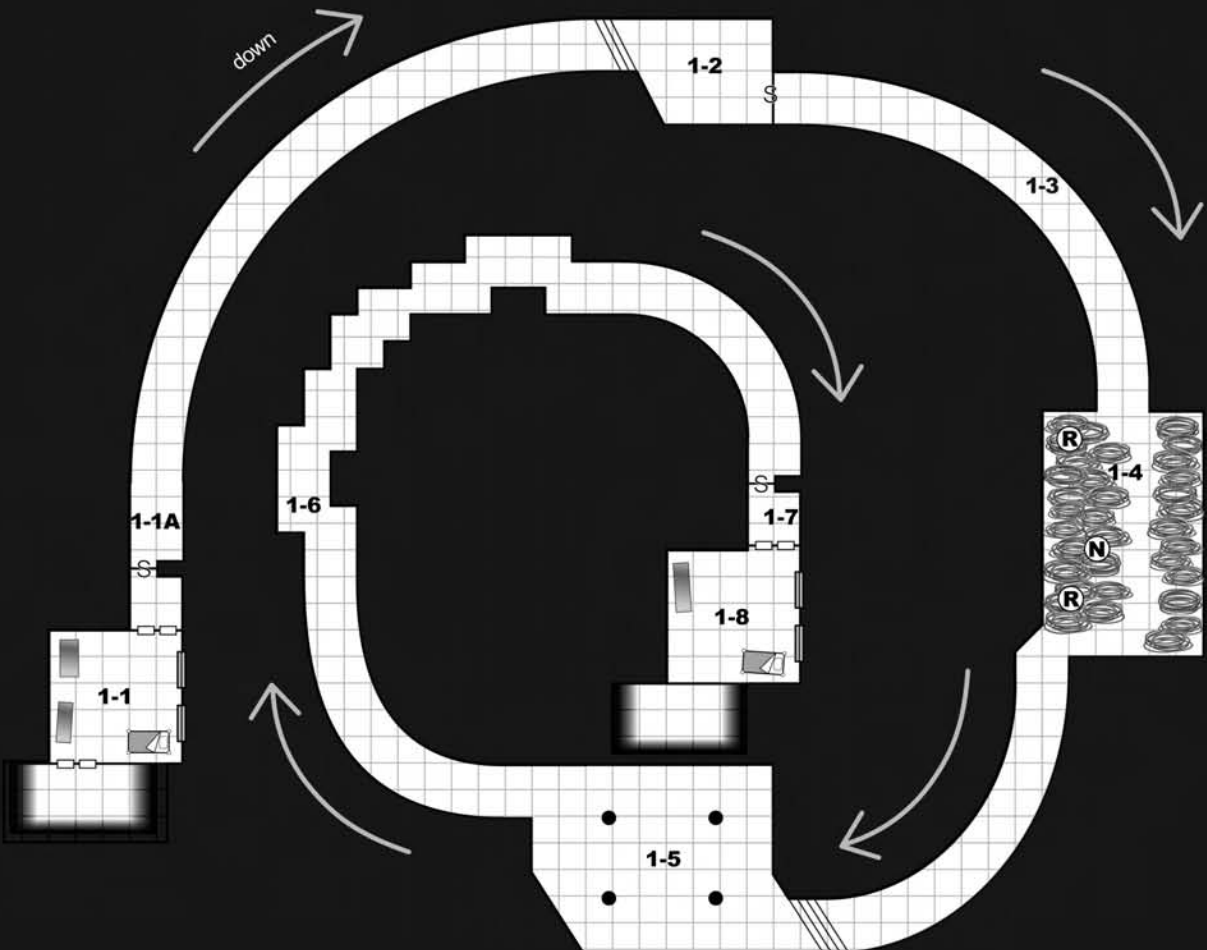


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The Nightmare Closet



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Dale of the Dead

By Ruth Lampi

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role-playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Dale of the Dead is designed for four to six players of 4th through 6th level. We recommend 18-28 total character levels between the party members. While the characters can be of any basic character class, a good mix of character classes is helpful. As this is a combat heavy module, at least one strong fighter will be necessary. See the "Scaling Information" section for ways to tailor this adventure your group's unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

As the day wears away into twilight, the party approaches Fendale, a small, sleepy village that boasts one good inn. Upon reaching the inn, it becomes clear that something in Fendale has gone terribly wrong. All the citizens of the village are dead, but they still go about their daily business. Interrupting the townsfolk incurs their attacks, and these undead can't be turned or rebuked. Behind the mystery of Fendale is a sadistic young bard, who grew up in the small town and has returned to exact revenge on everyone from his childhood. He is aided in his vengeance by two new and potent magics. The first of these can be found in a magic fiddle, which currently resides in the hands of a corpse on the village green. The second is a wand held by the bard, which contains a spell that causes a victim to continue doing whatever he was doing —indefinitely. Death itself won't interrupt this spell, and if the PCs don't find a way to defeat the bard, they might become permanent residents of Fendale.

Game Master's Section

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|-----|------|------------------------------------|----|
| 1-1 | 110 | C | Innkeeper, 3 card players, glutton | 5 |
| 1-3 | 111 | C | Rabid cockatrice | 3 |
| 1-4 | 112 | C | Fiddler, 8 dancers | 7 |
| 1-5 | 112 | C | Vegetable chopper, 3 children | 3 |
| 1-6 | 113 | C | 2 oxen, whittler | 6 |
| 1-7 | 114 | C | 6 corpses, 2 half corpses | 6 |
| 1-8 | 114 | C | Weeper, screamer | 2 |
| 1-10 | 114 | C | <i>Herdroid Bildrop</i> | 8 |

Scaling Information

Dale of the Dead is designed for 4-6 characters of 4th - 6th levels, but it can be easily modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 4th level): Remove one card player from area 1-1. Replace the cockatrice in area 1-3 with a bugbear. Reduce the number of dancers in area 1-4 to 4. Remove 1 animated ox corpse from area 1-6 and 3 chained corpses from 1-7.

Stronger parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 5th level): Double the number of card players in location 1-1. Add a second cockatrice to area 1-3. Add more dancers to area 1-4. Add 2 more animated oxen corpses to 1-6. Raise Herdroid's level by 2.

Getting the Players Involved

There are many reasons why the party might be traveling along this road. Use the one that fits best with the nature of your campaign and PCs.

- The party is on its way to some other town, adventure or reward, and comes upon the village at twilight.
- Someone in the party has heard of the inn at Fendale before, and the party expects to meet a contact or pick up a letter or message there.
- The party may have passed through Fendale two weeks ago on their way to another adventure, and may be returning down the same road with plans to stay at the inn.

Tasks and the Dead

Each of Herdroid's victims died doing the task or action they were doing when cursed. None of the dead will attack unless their task is interrupted. All tasks will be listed with each corpse in its area.

Background Story

Herdroid was never content in his life as a miller's son in Fendale. He firmly believed that he was possessed of great talent and skill, and he hated the menial work of a miller, and the fact that he was forced to take on a profession he loathed. The young miller longed to travel the world and play music (he styled himself a fiddler, although he was barely competent with the instrument), but his father thought such ideas were nonsense and foolishness.

Filled with anger and resentment, Herdroid vented his frustration by playing malicious pranks upon the townsfolk of Fendale, for which his father punished him severely. These punishments, although deserved, only ensured that the seeds of darkness, already planted in Herdroid's soul, found purchase and germinated.

As he grew to maturity, Herdroid vowed that he would become powerful and then one day, make everyone in Fendale pay for being boring peasants that didn't understand his genius. Herdroid left home as a teenager and took up the life of a bard. He wasn't a particularly good bard, but he did manage to gather some useful information, especially about the tomb of the mad gnome bard Mildrix. A bit of tomb robbing won Herdroid Mildrix's legendary fiddle, *Deathdance*, and even better, the *wand of servitude*.

At last, Herdroid had everything he needed to return home and exact his vengeance. The commoners of Fendale proved no match for the depraved bard, and he used his new items to make the everyday activities of Fendale its hellish end. Townsfolk danced to death, plowed to death, ate to death, added wood to their fires until they burned alive, worked their fingers literally to the bone, and never stopped, even when they died, which they all did in a few days. Herdroid's only disappointment was the discovery that his father had already died a year ago.

Now Herdroid can be found in the graveyard, furiously digging up his father with the goal of reanimating him. Herdroid is desperate to have the last word. Evidence of Herdroid's other pranks on his village can be found in the wreckage of Fendale.

Player Beginning

Read or paraphrase the following:

As the day wears away into twilight, you approach a small village along the road, which you've heard has a decent inn. Despite the late hour, you can see the forms of workers toiling in nearby fields. The closest seems to be moving a little oddly. From the direction of the town you hear the sound of someone playing a fiddle. From the sound of it, they need a lot more practice.

Fendale

Fendale was a small village before Herdrold came home. It consists of an inn facing the road, with two rooms and attached stables. Behind the inn and stables a number of the cottages and shops have burned down or their roofs have fallen in. Only a few buildings are still intact: two cottages, the mill, and the church. The village green is a large outdoor area with a spreading oak tree, and behind the church is a graveyard. There is no light other than the natural, hazy twilight, which will fade over the course of an hour. The exception is in the graveyard, where Herdrold has several lanterns amid the tombstones to illuminate his digging. Unless noted otherwise, ceilings are 10 feet tall. All walls and doors have the following statistics:

Simple Wooden Wall: 6" thick; hardness 5; hp 60; Break DC 20; Climb DC 21.

Simple Wooden Door: 1" thick; hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 13 (stuck), 15 (locked.).

Wandering Monsters

There is a 15% chance (1-3 on d20) per hour that the characters will come across a random encounter. Randomly determine the nature of the encounter by rolling 1d6:

| 1d6 | Encounter |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1-3 | 1 scythe-bearing corpse |
| 4-5 | 2d6 animated rat corpses |
| 6 | 1 animated ox corpse |

The following statistics are provided for easy reference.

Animated Scythe-Bearing Corpse: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init -1; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1) or scythe +3 melee (2d4+1/x4); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead, they cannot be turned

or rebuked.

Possessions: Scythe.

Animated Rat Corpse: CR 1/2; Small undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init -1; Spd. 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp -2; Atk/Full Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1) or slam +3 melee (1d4+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 15, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Animated Ox Corpse: (stats as in area 1-6)

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – The Inn Common Room (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This room is a dim common room, unlit save for the fading light streaming in through dusty windows. A man at one table appears to be eating and three others are playing cards in the far left corner. Behind the bar, the innkeeper is shuffling around wiping glasses. It is too dark to note many details, but something smells terrible.

The innkeeper is behind the bar and his task is wiping glasses. He has quite a collection, though no one would call them clean. The man has literally worked his fingers to the bone. The card players are intent on their game. The eating patron's task is eating. He has consumed all of his food, and has moved onto eating his plate, napkin, and table settings; he is having some trouble with chewing his silverware. There are three exits to the common room: the front entrance, the door to the stables at rear right (locked DC 25), and the door to the inn's rooms at rear left. There are five tables and twenty chairs. Four windows face the road, with dusty panes of leaded, yellow glass.

Tactics: None of the corpses in the inn will attack unless their tasks are interrupted. Interrupting any one card player interrupts the whole game. Touching or otherwise physically distracting the innkeeper from his task will interrupt him. The eating patron will not attack unless jostled or otherwise interrupted. Presented with anything he can put in his mouth, he will try to consume it. The innkeeper is better armed than the others, having claw-like bony fingers and an easily broken glass clutched in his other hand. Once distracted, all will fight until destroyed.

Treasure: 20 bottles of unopened famous Fendale beer (worth 2 sp each) are stowed under the bar. Everything else has apparently gone bad or been otherwise contaminated. Any money that was here seems to have been already looted.

Animated Corpses (4): CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29 each; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Innkeeper's Corpse: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init -1; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk slam +4 melee (1d6+3) or claw +4 melee (1d4+2) or broken tankard +4 melee (1d4+2); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because this animated corpse is not a typical undead creature, it cannot be turned or rebuked.

Area 1-2 –Inn Rooms: Read or paraphrase the following:

Two rooms stand open off the empty corridor. One appears to have been abandoned in a hurry and the other looks freshly made up for a guest.

A search of the guest room will turn up a few papers. Read or paraphrase the following:

A sheaf of sheet music is on an end table, most of it sad ballads about a young man shunned by his father. The rest feature songs of violent acts of vengeance enacted upon father figures. A few of the songs appear to be recently penned original compositions. There are also scribbled notes about something powerful found in the tomb of the mad gnome bard Mildrix. Over the scribbles are more scribbles in darker ink, which read, "Here with vile Fendale dies the name of Herdrold Bildrop. From these ashes I arise as Herevor Direfiddle, Dread Lord of all dances."

Area 1-3 – The Stables (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The stables are dark and dusty. An unlit torch is visible on the left wall. In what light there is, you can make out a line of four stalls. There is the sound of something moving, and a strong animal odor in the air.

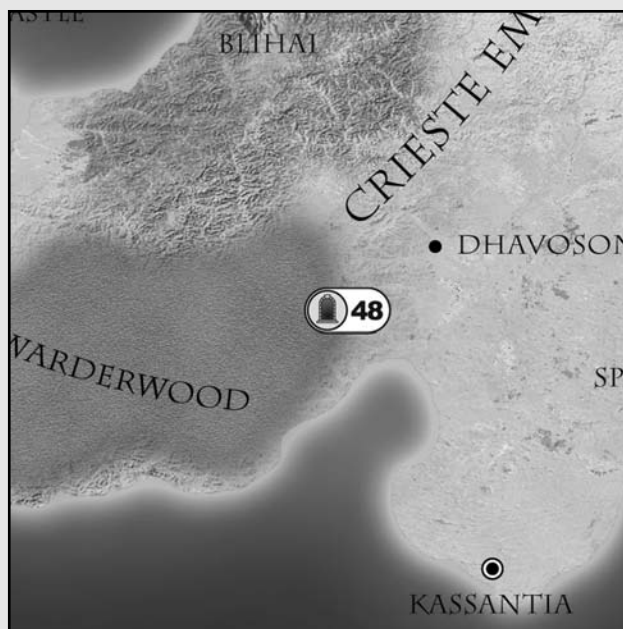
There are three exits from this area: the locked door the party entered through, a locked door to area 1-4 (lock DC 25), and a double door leading out to the road, barred from the inside. There are four stalls in the stable, each fully visible to any creature with a height above 4 feet. Stall one is closed and latched, and contains two half-starved goats. Stall two is open, and holds the broken statue of a goat. Stall three is also open, and has become the lair of a hungry cockatrice. The last stall, open as well, contains the rotting corpse (un-animated) of a horse.

Tactics: The cockatrice will leave its stall and attack the party as soon as it becomes aware of their presence.

Cockatrice: CR 3; Small magical beast; HD 5d10; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +5; Grp -1;

DCC World

The sleepy village of Fendale is found on the north-east edge of the Warderwood. With but a single inn to welcome the weary traveler, the town is notable only for its proximity to popular merchant routes running to the sea.



Atk/Full Atk bite +9 melee (1d4-2 plus petrification); SA Petrification; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Listen +7, Spot +7; Alertness, Dodge, Weapon Finesse.

SA – *Petrification (Su)*: Bite, Fort save DC 12 or instantly turn to stone.

Area 1-4 – The Dancing Green (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

This appears to be the town square. A macabre festival is taking place, presided over by a corpse with a fiddle. His slow lurching movements do not improve his playing. Couples stagger and sway, dancing on in death around the fiddler under a central, spreading oak tree. Some prankster has been at work here; the town cleric is dancing in a lady's smock and a dunce's cap, and has a sign reading "Dunderhead" pinned directly into his back. A stern-faced woman has a mustache and silly eyebrows scrawled in pen on her dead face, and another dancing man has a plucked turkey pulled down over his head. From here the whole village is visible. Three buildings have burned to the ground, and another has collapsed under the weight of an over-thatched roof.

Give players handout A. The fiddle being played is *Deathdance*, the fiddle of the late, mad gnome bard Mildrix. Because it is being played both slowly and badly, its effects will only work on the party after 1d6 rounds spent on the green. After 1d6 rounds within 50 feet of the fiddle, party members must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) to resist dancing. Once dancing, a party member is allowed two more Fortitude saves—one after two rounds of dancing at DC 14, and one more after four rounds at DC 16. Once three Fortitude saves are failed, the party member must dance until the fiddle music is stopped.

Stopping the fiddle music will interrupt the dance, the dancers, and the fiddler.

Fiddler, Animated Corpse: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – *Turn immunity*: Because this animated corpse is not a typical undead creature, it cannot be turned or rebuked.

Possession: Deathdance (see sidebar)

Dancers, Animated Corpses (8): CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29 each; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – *Turn immunity*: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Area 1-5 – A Hovel (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A dim figure moves about within this hovel. On closer inspection, you see the corpse of a woman chopping what used to be vegetables, but are now little more than rancid mush. In addition to the woman, there are three small forms, the corpses of children, lying "asleep" in their beds.

This area is within the range of the effect of *Deathdance*. If the fiddle is still being played, PCs must make the appropriate saving throws every 1d6 rounds.

Tactics: The woman will not attack unless her chopping is interrupted. The children will stay peacefully asleep and immobile unless someone tries to wake them.

Vegetable Chopper, Animated Woman's Corpse: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk cleaver +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – *Turn immunity*: Because this animated corpse is not a typical undead creature, it cannot be turned or rebuked.

Possessions: Cleaver.

Animated Children's Corpses (3): CR 1/2; small undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16 each; Init -1; Spd. 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp -5; Atk/Full Atk slam +0 melee (1d4-1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – *Turn immunity*: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Deathdance

This instrument is a sleek black fiddle with silver scrollwork, formerly the property of the Mildrix the mad gnome bard. When played, it forces all creatures within 50 feet of the performer to make a Fortitude save at the DC of the wielder's perform check +2 (max DC 28) or begin dancing. Once dancing, affected creatures are allowed two more Fortitude saves to resist the fiddle: one after two rounds of dancing at the original DC +2, and one more after four additional rounds at the original DC +4. Once three Fortitude saves are failed, the creature must dance until the fiddle music is stopped.

Strong necromancy; CL 16; craft wondrous item, *irresistible dance*, price 12,000 gp; weight 2 lbs.

New Spell: Servitude

Necromancy

Level: Bard 4

Components: V, S

Casting time: 1 standard action

Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Target: 1 creature

Duration: 1 day/level (see text)

Saving throw: Fortitude negates

Spell resistance: Yes

The target of this spell must succeed on a Fortitude saving throw or repeat the last standard action made in the round (or the round before if the caster has a higher initiative), indefinitely. If the target's last action was loading a crossbow, he must continue to load without firing. If the target was healing an ally, he must cast every healing spell he has and then attempt Heal checks every round. The target can move only if he must do so to continue his action, otherwise he forgoes his move action for the round. If the spell is cast on someone who, for whatever reason, cannot repeat his last action, the spell fails.

The spell can be broken after a failed save, only if the target is physically restrained from completing the action. In this case the target is allowed one additional saving throw, and if it succeeds, the spell is broken. However, regardless of whether the second saving throw is a failure or a success, the target takes 3d6 points of damage from the physical and mental strain.

In addition, a creature that dies while under the influence of this spell is reanimated as a zombie, and will continue to perform its action for all time. However, if a zombie created by the spell is prevented from performing its action, it will attack any living creature in the area, and will be a free-willed zombie from then on.

Zombies created by the spell cannot be commanded, turned, or rebuked.

Area 1-6 – The Mill Warehouse (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

This appears to be a mill warehouse as well as a main entrance. A ladder, now broken on the floor, once offered access to a narrow balcony that runs all around the room. The balcony is piled high with bags of rotting grain and flour. A corpse is leaning against the wall just inside the door, whittling. From the shavings at his feet, you can see he started with a piece of wood. Lately what he has been whittling is his own arm. Where his lower left arm was, there is now a well-sharpened bony spike.

Across the room, some of the machinery of the mill is visible, near the open door to the next room and the grinding floor. Two dead oxen in a wooden wheel enclosure still pull in their traces, shredding their rotting flesh while turning the millstones in the room beyond. As the oxen plod around, they periodically trample a very dead and immobile body deeper into the dirt floor. The body appears to have been reaching for a gleaming, jeweled rapier stuck into the wood post the oxen are circling.

This area is within the range of the effect of *Deathdance*. If the fiddle is still being played, PCs must make the appropriate saving throws every 1d6 rounds.

Development: Getting to the sword means getting in the way of the oxen and the wooden wheel they are walking in. The oxen will break free if interrupted, ramming a pillar and dislodging a bag of grain from the balcony, which will fall and hit the whittler, interrupting *him*. This interruption of the mill wheel's turning will also interrupt everyone in area 1-6. Should anyone attack the whittler before interrupting the oxen, his first strike will hit the wall, dislodging grain bags that fall on the oxen, interrupting everyone in the building.

Whittler, Animated Corpse: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk bone spear +4 melee (1d6+2) or knife +4 melee (1d4+2/19-20); SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because this animated corpse is not a typical undead creature, it cannot be turned or rebuked.

Possessions: Knife.

Animated Ox Corpses (2): CR 3; Large undead; HD 10d12+3; hp 68; Init -1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 8, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +14; Atk/Full Atk gore +9 melee (1d8+7) or slam +10 melee (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because this animated corpse is not a typical undead creature, it cannot be turned or rebuked.

Treasure: The rapier stuck in the post past the oxen is a +2 *rapier*. Herdold threw it there some time ago and has been unable to retrieve it without interrupting his masterpiece at the mill.

Area 1-7 – The Mill Grinding Floor (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

Two giant millstones are the centerpieces of this room. Dragged along with the motion of the millstone's turning is a line of six corpses. They are all chained at the wrists to the millstones, which appear to be grinding two other corpses. Only the upper bodies of these last two figures remain.

If the mill wheel's turning was interrupted in the last room, all inhabitants of this room will already be interrupted. When a party member enters, the corpses will move from their positions and attack. The chained corpses will pull their arms out of their rotting sockets, leaving their chained limbs still in the shackles, and come after the party with open-mouthed groans. The two half corpses will take two rounds to pull free, and attack as well, trailing spinal columns and entrails.

Animated Corpses (6): CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29 each; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Animated Half Corpses (2): CR 1/2; Medium undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16 each; Init -1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk slam +2 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., sin-

gle actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Area 1-8 – A cottage (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

You hear a faint, raspy whimper from inside this darkened cottage. An inanimate male corpse lies sprawled just inside the doorway. Beyond the male corpse, farther inside the cottage, are the animate corpses of two women. One is standing facing the doorway and is apparently screaming. However, the only sound that comes from her throat is a thin rasp. Another woman is curled on the floor weeping. She is obviously dead, but keening gurgles still bubble from her lips.

This area is within the range of the effect of *Deathdance*. If the fiddle is still being played, PCs must make the appropriate saving throws every 1d6 rounds.

Tactics: Neither woman will attack unless touched, jostled, or otherwise interrupted.

Screamer and Weeper, Animated Corpses: CR 1; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 29 each; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+1); SA –; SQ Damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., single actions only, turn immunity, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 8, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

SQ – Turn immunity: Because these animated corpses are not typical undead creatures, they cannot be turned or rebuked.

Area 1-9 – The Church: Read or paraphrase the following:

The church is empty, and is lit by four guttering torches, put there by some living hand not too long ago. The walls and altar have been violently redecorated. Some of the graffiti on the walls appears to be very angry song lyrics in very bad handwriting.

Area 1-10 – The Graveyard (EL 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

In the dim light of several lanterns, a young man can be seen digging madly. Lantern light upon the nearest tombstone reveals its inscrip-

tion, “Ervard Bildrop, beloved husband and father.” The young man is dressed in black leather, filthy from digging, and has a wand at his belt. What appears to be some kind of invisible, magical servant “digs” beside him, and small clumps of dirt rise periodically into the air and are tossed onto the growing pile of dirt beside the grave.

Give players handout B. The graveyard is surrounded by a fence (climb DC 10) and has only one exit, the door to area 1-9.

Development: *Alarm* has been cast around Herdroid’s location to alert him if any roaming corpses or other interruptions come through. Herdroid has also already cast *unseen servant* to help him dig. Any PC who sneaks up within earshot without being detected or triggering the alarm will hear Herdroid cursing his father and swearing that he will have the last word, showing said father how powerful his son has become.

Tactics: On becoming aware of the party, Herdroid will cast his defensive spells to protect himself, though whenever a promising opportunity arises to use the *wand of servitude* on a PC (a critical failure, a move taken to reload, to heal, to take some non-damaging action toward Herdroid) he will use it gleefully. Herdroid will monologue with his free actions and declare himself the great “Herevor Direfiddle, Dread Lord of all dances.” He will be especially hostile to any PC who openly mocks him or his new choice of title. Once Herdroid starts losing, his monologues shift to whining about how no one understands him or his art.

Herdroid Bildrop, male human Brd 8: CR 8; Medium humanoid (human); HD 8d6+8; hp 36; Init +2; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk rapier +8 melee (1d6/18-20) or shortbow +8 ranged (1d6/x3); Full Atk rapier +8/+3 melee (1d6/18-20) or shortbow +8/+3 ranged (1d6/x3); SA –; SQ Bardic knowledge +9, counter-song 8/day, *fascinate* 8/day, inspire competence 8/day, inspire courage (+2) 8/day, *suggestion*; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Bluff +14, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Jump +2, Listen +10, Move Silently +13, Perform (singing) +14, Perform (string instruments) +5, Spellcraft +12, Tumble +13, Use Magic Device +11 (+13 scrolls); Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Weapon Finesse, Improved Feint

Spells (3/4/4/2; save DC 13 + spell level): 0 – *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *resistance*, *summon instrument*; 1st – *alarm*, *expeditious retreat*,

hideous laughter, *unseen servant*; 2nd – *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*; 3rd – *crushing despair*, *fear*, *summon monster III*.

Possessions: +2 studded leather, rapier, shortbow, 20 arrows, *wand of servitude*, 500 gold.

The number of charges left in the *wand of servitude* is at the GM’s discretion (see sidebar).

Wrapping Up

Destroying Herdroid will end the spell of the *wand of servitude*. However, at this time, all remaining animated corpses, both human and animal, will become free-willed and may begin to wander the countryside wreaking havoc. PCs who destroy the remaining zombies and then bury the unfortunate dead of Fendale should receive an additional XP award.

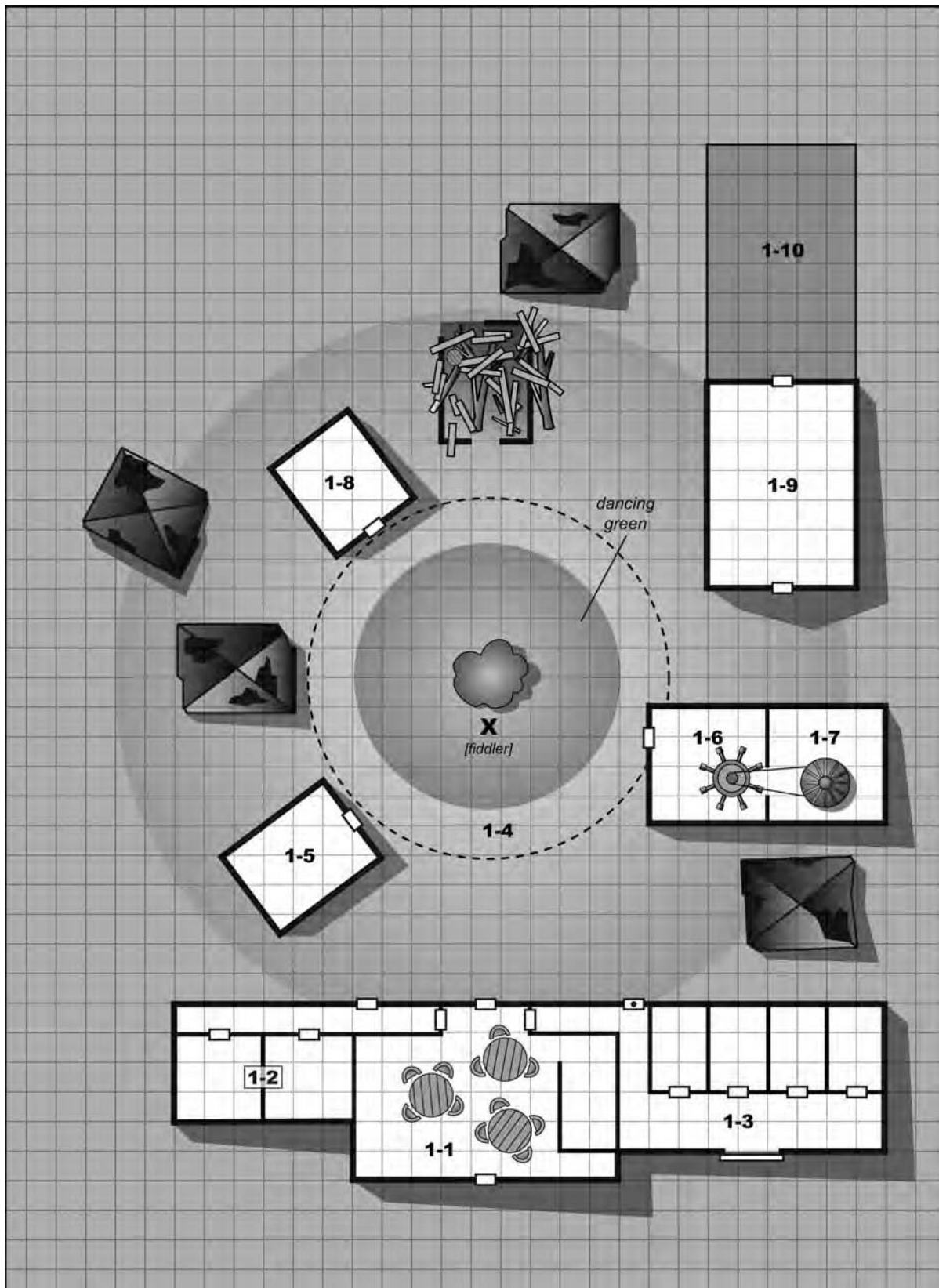


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Dale of the Dead



Dungeon Crawl Classics Like Clockwork

By Jason Little

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. *Dungeon Crawl Classics* feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Like Clockwork is an intermediate adventure in *The Adventure Continues* series, and is best suited for a party of four or five characters of levels 4-6. All classes will find this adventure challenging, but having at least one or two characters with keen senses and trapfinding, such as rogues, rangers and bards, will be particularly helpful. Given the inherent dangers of low-level encounters, a character that can provide magic healing will also be very useful.

Adventure Summary

The Gnomish ambassadors in the predominantly human city of Karesh are horrified by the alarmingly high number of gnomish deaths in the city over the last several weeks. Numerous tinkers, gadgeteers, and inventors have been found dead in their workshops. Eye witnesses tell conflicting stories on what they saw or heard, and very little evidence can be found at the crime scenes. The city council turns to the adventurers to investigate these grisly murders and stop the culprit before the gnomish community abandons Karesh, taking valuable merchant business with them!

The culprit is a gnomish tinker named Claren Cogwheel, who was expelled from the Gnomecrafter's Guild for foul deeds – his carelessness led to the death of a respected member of the Guild. Outraged by his dismissal, Claren created a small army of clockwork assassins to kill the guild members who kicked him out. The party will soon discover that the mad tinker is not all that he appears. Years ago he discovered the secret to a longer life, by slowly replacing his body parts with gearworks. The mad tinker is part flesh, part construct – a medieval cyborg!

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|-----|-----|------|---|----|
| 1-1 | 120 | C | 2 duergar rogues | 5 |
| | | T | Alchemist's fire trap | 2 |
| 1-2 | 122 | T, C | Creshire Blue trap, 4 clockwork rats | 4 |
| 1-3 | 123 | T | Manhole trap | 3 |
| | | C | Ochre jelly | 5 |
| 1-4 | 124 | C | <i>Animated tools, Izzlebit the Imp</i> | 4 |
| 1-5 | 126 | T | Tanglefoot glue trap, <i>lightning bolt trap</i> | 5 |
| 1-6 | 127 | C | <i>Claren Cogwheel</i> , 3 clockwork rats, 3 duergar warriors | 7 |
| 1-7 | 128 | T, C | The escape hatch, 3 clockwork rats | 5 |

Scaling Information

GMs can quickly adjust the difficulty of the scenario to accommodate slightly more or less experienced groups. Consider adapting the adventure using any of the following suggestions:

For weaker parties (characters below 4th level, or for fewer than 15 total character levels): Decrease all saving throw DCs by 1, and skill check DCs by 2. Remove one clockwork rat from areas 1-2 and 1-6. Reduce the dropoff from area 1-3, reduce the dropoff from 40 feet to 20 feet. Remove one of the tiny tools from the tool shed in area 1-4. Remove the tanglefoot glue from the trap in area 1-5.

For stronger parties (characters above 5th level, or for more than 25 total character levels): Increase saving throw DCs by 1 for all traps. Add a third duergar rogue to area 1-1. Add 1 to 2 clockwork rats to areas 1-2 and 1-6. Increase the damage from the *lightning bolt trap* in area 1-5 from 5d6 to 7d6. Add 1 level of rogue to Claren Cogwheel in area 1-6.

Background Story

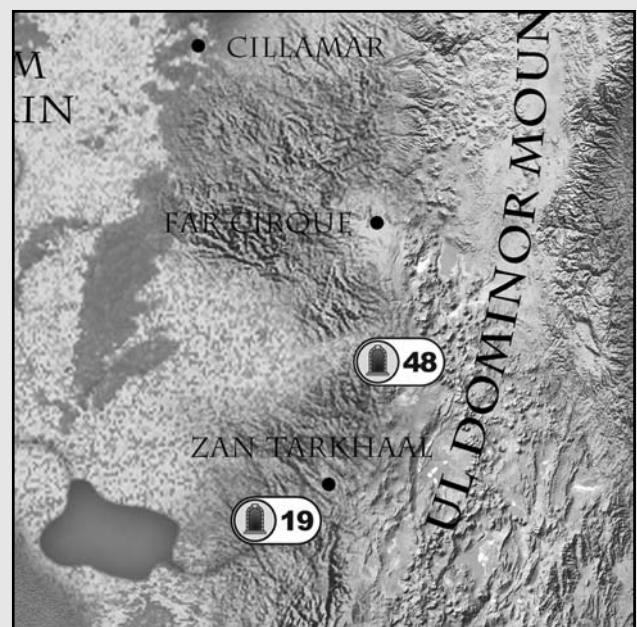
Claren Cogwheel began his career as a precocious apprentice to a well-respected gnome engineer and tinker, Dimble Donnagan. Claren was inquisitive and brilliant, and it didn't take long before he had surpassed his master in skill and knowledge. Claren cut his apprenticeship short and attempted to establish himself as a master tinker – but his unconventional practices and disregard for the rigid guidelines of apprenticeship made it difficult for him to get any work.

Frustrated and embarrassed, Claren was forced to return to his former master and beg to complete his apprenticeship, despite having far more talent and experience than many in his field who already bore the rank of master. Dimble Donnagan accepted Claren's request, but his return to the apprenticeship was twice as grueling and humiliating.

Claren's anger and hatred also made him reckless. During a long, complicated experiment, Dimble Donnagan was killed. The High Artisans, the governing body of the Gnomecrafter's Guild, found Claren to be

DCC World

The city of Karesh, long renowned for its hospitality towards gnomes and their dour cousins, is found in the western foothills of the Ul Dominor mountains. Of particular note is the city's architecture, with its elevated paths and winding stairs, specifically designed to ease communication and comfort between the wee folk and the taller humans. Drinking establishments and way stations, especially, are built for folk both tall and short.



partially responsible for Dimble's death, due to his carelessness. Claren was outraged, and as he was expelled from the Guild, he vowed revenge upon those who had mistreated his genius.

In the following decades, Claren Cogwheel worked to perfect his tinkering arts, funneling his hatred and rage into his work. Claren went so far as to hire duergar thieves to help case and map out his victim's homes, and duergar artisans to aid him in the development of his precious experiments. Finally, after devising several cruel gadgets – including his mechanical assassin of choice, the clockwork rat – Claren set to work exacting his revenge on the surviving members of the High Artisans who expelled him from the Gnomecrafter's Guild.

Each victim received a package from Claren the day before his murder. The package contained a small wheel of Creshire Blue, a sharp, pungent cheese with an unmistakable odor. While the cheese is a rare delicacy among gnomes, it served a devious purpose. Claren's clockwork rats were trained to recognize the smell, and could track the scent of the cheese to their victims.

The adventure starts just after Claren has slain the sixth member of the High Artisans of the Gnomecrafter's Guild – only three more remain.

Player Beginning

Read or paraphrase the following:

It hasn't taken long to realize that something is spooking the citizens of the gnomish quarter in Karesh. Over the last several weeks, five upstanding gnomes have been brutally slain in their homes or businesses.

Make that six. Another body was found earlier this morning – that of Eriash Endleman, a gnomish alchemist who had been a well-loved member of the community for decades.

The local constabulary is feeling pressure from the gnomish community to get to the bottom of these crimes. The bureaucrats of Karesh are embroiled in a public relations nightmare and are campaigning to soothe the public. They need help investigating the murders more efficiently – the efforts of their militia and current law enforcement simply has not been sufficient. In an effort to both assuage the concerns of the gnomish community and solve these murders, you have been hired to help the investigation.

You were briefed on what the local constabulary already knows – which is not much – on the way to the most recent crime scene. As you head to Eriash Endleman's workshop in the gnomish quarter, you review what little information you have been able to glean so far:

The constabulary believes all the murders were committed at night, as all the bodies were found in the morning. All of the bodies bear gruesome cuts and bled a great deal. All the victims are gnomes of solid reputation, successful businessmen, tradesmen or artists in their particular craft.

And all of Karesh is looking for you to get to the bottom of this and put an end to the killings before it gets worse.

Like Clockwork

After moving beyond Area 1-1: *The Scene of the Crime*, the adventure takes place in the worked stone tunnels cleared out by the mad tinker's creations. Unless outlined separately or otherwise noted, the few doors found are reinforced metal doors. Otherwise, this adventure consists largely of worked stone tunnels and chambers. There are no wandering monsters in this adventure.

Worked Stone Walls: 3 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 540; break DC 50; Climb DC 25.

Reinforced Metal Door: 2 inches thick; hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – The Scene of the Crime (EL 5): When the party is ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Eriash Endleman lies sprawled and bloody in his own workshop. The elderly gnome alchemist lies in a pool of his own blood, amid shattered glass, broken tables, and tattered remains of various experiments. An exquisitely crafted alembic and retort are smashed beyond recovery, and dozens of flasks and decanters have been reduced to shards.

Despite its size, the alchemist's workshop seems small amid the clutter and ruin. The workshop is 40 feet wide, and 20 feet from the entrance to the back wall. The east and west walls are lined with shelves, which once held reagents and all manner of alchemical concoctions – most are now bare. The northern wall features two wide, low tables, a disarray of weights and scales, mortars and pestles, and several large leatherbound books filled with Eriash's business transactions and current orders, penned in a neat, measured hand.

The polished wood floor is scuffed and nicked from some altercation. Small scratches are gouged into the hardwood near the old gnome's body. The body itself sports a dozens, perhaps hundreds, of small, even cuts.

Above the stink of death and the pungent mash of alchemical reagents, there lies the faintest trace of a sharp, tangy, almost familiar scent.

Eriash was killed by several clockwork rats after receiving a wheel of Creshire Blue cheese from Claren Cogwheel the day before. Claren Cogwheel has dispatched two duergar rogues to retrieve the package the cheese was sent in to eliminate that clue, as well as pilfer some of Eriash's reagents and tools. When the duergar heard the commotion outside as the party approached, they cast *invisibility* on themselves and now lie in wait for the group.

Tactics: The duergar rogues are lurking in the squares marked with a D on the map, invisible and ready to strike. Once the group splits up to search the room for clues, they attack. The duergar strike invisibly their first turn, and characters need to make a Listen check opposed by the lower of the two duergar's Move Silently checks. Characters who fail the Listen check are surprised and unable to act the first round of combat.

The duergar strike whoever is closest to them when combat starts, then move to flanking positions to allow each other the benefit of their sneak attack ability. They fight to the death.

Duergar Rog2 (2): CR 3; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 2d6+4; hp 15, 13; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/19-20, masterwork short sword) or dagger +2 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or dagger +2 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack (+1d6), spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., duergar traits, evasion, light sensitivity, trapfinding; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5 (+7 metal and stone objects), Disable Device +5, Hide +6, Listen +5, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +6, Search +5, Spot +5, Survival -1 (+1 following tracks); Dodge.

Languages: Common, Undercommon, Dwarven.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day - *enlarge person*, and *invisibility* (caster level 4th); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

Light Sensitivity: Duergar are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: masterwork short sword, dagger, masterwork studded leather armor, *potion of cure light wounds*, 15 gp.

Aftermath: Aside from their minor gear, a DC 15 Search of the bodies reveals one of the duergar has a thin piece of hooked wire, approximately two feet in length. This is an impromptu tool used to bypass the alchemist fire trap leading to area 1-2. A DC 15

Disable Device check allows a character to make the connection, granting them a +2 circumstance bonus to Search or Disable Device checks against the trap later on.

Gathering Clues: There are a lot of opportunities to glean information from the scene of the crime. GMs are encouraged to embellish any of these details if the group enjoys sleuthing and would like to lead the players around town to follow up on various clues (such as the source of the Creshire Blue cheese). Otherwise, a thorough search of the room should offer enough impetus to move the party to investigate the tunnel leading to area 1-2.

A DC 15 Heal check of Eriash's body indicates that the poor gnome died of blood loss from the numerous cuts across his body – each cut made by a very sharp blade, smaller than a dagger. The majority of cuts are around the gnome's legs and feet.

A DC 15 Craft (alchemy) check on the contents of the workshop show that there are some salvageable reagents and alchemical ingredients here, worth quite a bit of money. 1d6 tindertwigs, 1d4 sunrods and 1d2 thunderstones can be recovered from the debris.

A DC 10 Search of the eastern wall of the workshop reveals Eriash Endlemen's stout wooden lockbox on the bottom shelf was untouched. The key to the lockbox is in Eriash's pocket. Otherwise, a DC 15 Open Lock check will also open the lockbox. The lockbox contains Eriash's business receipts and petty cash – 23 gold, 54 silver and 80 copper.

A DC 10 Search of the western wall reveals a small gift box, wrapped in bright blue silk. The box is currently empty, but it is clearly the source of the smell. A DC 10 Wisdom or Intelligence check, or DC 10 Profession (cook) check identifies the smell as an especially strong type of veined cheese, known as Creshire Blue.

Closer inspection of the floor around the body makes a pattern fairly apparent – the gouges and scrapes in the wood floor look too regular and connected to be random. A DC 10 Knowledge (nature) check indicates that they look like rodent prints, but that a normal rodent wouldn't have the strength or claws sharp enough to leave gouges in hardwood like this.

A DC 15 Survival check to track the prints, or a DC 15 Search check of the northern wall, will eventually lead players to the northwest corner of the shop, where a small hole has been gnawed away in the back of the wall. The hole is in the corner below one of the tables, and is only a foot wide.

What Lies Beyond: Behind the hole is a dark tunnel of roughly worked stone. There is no light in the

tunnel, making it difficult to investigate without providing a light source or peeling back sections of wall paneling to make the hole larger.

The panels are trapped to discourage pursuit, however. Three flasks of alchemist's fire have been carefully rigged above the hole in the wall. At the slightest jostling, they will shatter and ignite the paneling – and anyone unlucky enough to be adjacent – with the alchemical substance.

A DC 12 Strength check is sufficient to break pieces of paneling away from the wall, but will automatically set off the trap. Passing a lit torch through the hole in the wall for a better view of the tunnel has a 25% chance per round of setting off the trap, as well.

A Small size character can put his head through the hole to get a better look and search the hole. A character doing this gains a +4 circumstance bonus to the Search check required to spot the trap.

Rigged Alchemist's Fire Trap: CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; no reset; Atk +10 ranged touch (2d6 fire plus 2 fire splash damage to adjacent spaces, alchemist's fire); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 20. For every 5 points by which the character exceeds the Disable Device DC, one vial of alchemist's fire can be recovered intact.

Area 1-2 – A Twisting Tunnel (EL 4): Once the opening to the tunnel has been exposed, read the following aloud:

The hole at the back of the workshop is narrow – barely more than two feet around. No light or breeze emanates from the tunnel, but with what little light filters in from the workshop, you can see the narrow entrance into the tunnel widens just a few feet farther along.

A DC 15 Listen check at the entrance reveals the faint scuffling or scratching of metal on stone deeper within the tunnel. Exceeding the DC by 5 or more indicates it sounds like several small metal knives being quickly dragged along a whetstone.

The entrance is narrow and requires a DC 10 Escape Artist check to successfully navigate. The narrow section extends only 10 feet into the tunnel, and then it widens to 5 feet. Creatures of Small size or larger are considered squeezed as they traverse the narrow portion of the tunnel.

There is no light in the tunnel. The floor and walls are roughly worked stone.

Cramped Quarters: Even once after the characters are past the narrow entrance, the tunnel is only five feet wide, and makes wielding two-handed melee weapons or reach weapons tricky. All melee



attacks made within the tunnel with two-handed melee weapons or reach weapons suffer -2 to the attack rolls.

Assuming the party can see within the tunnel, a DC 15 Survival check allows a character with the Track feat to pick up the odd animal tracks and follow them along the tunnel. Exceeding the check by 5 or more reveals that there are likely four separate sets of prints along the trail.

A Cheesy Trap: At the space marked on the map, a tripwire has been set along the floor. The wire is attached to a small panel in the ceiling – (the space marked R on the map). If tripped, the wire opens the small panel in the ceiling, causing a small chunk of Creshire cheese, attached to a string, to swing down toward the characters, as well as dropping 2 clockwork rats from the compartment behind the panel.

Creshire Tripwire Blue Trap: CR 0; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; Atk +8 melee touch (1d3 subdual and DC 13 Fortitude save or nauseated for 1d3 minutes); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20 (cut wires).

Tactics: Once the party reaches the tripwire in the tunnel, two clockwork rats approach from the dropoff near area 1-3 to attack. If the tripwire is triggered, two additional clockwork rats from the compartment overhead drop into battle. These rats fall into the space marked R on the map.

Aside from possibly causing nausea in a character struck by the cheese, the Creshire cheese's strong odor is used by the clockwork rats to track and mark their targets. The clockwork rats will move to attack any creature bearing the scent of the Creshire

cheese. If more than one creature is so marked, they focus on the closest marked creature. If no creatures are marked, they each focus on the nearest target. All the clockwork rats fight to the death.

If the party avoided but was unable to disable the Creshire tripwire before the battle begins, there is a 25% chance each round the trap is triggered whenever a creature performs a standard action in the space marked with the tripwire, or whenever a creature moves through the space marked with the tripwire.

Clockwork Rats (4): CR 1; Small construct; HD 1d10+10; hp 18, 16, 16, 15; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA razor bite; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 1/-, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con -, Int -, Wis 3, Cha 1.

Feats and Skills: Balance +6, Climb +8; Weapon Finesse.

Razor Bite (Ex): If a clockwork rat scores a critical hit in combat, the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for 1d3 rounds from blood loss. A DC 15 Heal check or any healing effect that heals hit point damage stops the blood loss.

Area 1-3 – The Long Drop (EL 7): When the party approaches the end of the long, twisting tunnel, read the following aloud:

The tunnel quickly ends, capped with nothing but a large metal manhole cover nearly five feet across set into the floor. A sturdy metal ring is set into the center of the manhole cover. Rather than just being a large metal disc set into a fitting, the northern edge of the lid has a wide metal bracket and well-oiled hinge.

The manhole cover lifts easily enough, requiring only a DC 8 Strength check. Cautious parties may examine the lid more closely, but will find nothing of interest. However, searching the north wall itself may reveal part of the trap linked to the manhole cover.

A wide metal plate on the wall is rigged to the second rung of the ladder below the manhole cover. When pressure is applied to the second rung, the plate extends, pushing the manhole cover on its well-oiled hinge to slam shut. The manhole cover will also slam shut if a rope is secured to it – after a character has started his descent. If this occurs, the character must make a DC 15 Climb check to maintain his hold on the rope, or fall from that height.

When the manhole cover is opened, read the following aloud:

The lid opens wide enough to rest along the north wall and reveals a vertical stone tube that extends 40 feet into the depths. Wide metal handles are cemented into the southern side of the tube at 9-inch intervals.

The stench of rotting wood and filth wafts up from below.

Manhole Trap: CR 3; mechanical; location trigger (second ladder rung); automatic reset; Atk manhole cover +10 melee (2d6 and DC 10 + damage taken Climb check (DC 10 + damage taken) or fall 40 ft., manhole cover); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20 (wedge panel arm shut).

Note: If a character fails the required Climb check, they may fall up to 40 feet down the tube. If a quick-thinking character asks to grab a rung on the way down, they can attempt a DC 25 Climb check at the halfway point of the fall to grab onto a rung as they fall past. If successful, the character suffers 2d6 damage and stops their descent 20 feet above the floor, holding onto the ladder, rather than falling the full 40 feet for 4d6 damage.

What Lies Beneath: The tube widens 10 feet above the floor, into a small room at the base of the ladder. The ladder continues along the southern wall, all the way to the floor itself. When a character reaches the bottom of the tube, where the ladder extends into the room, and can see the area, read the following aloud:

The tube opens into a small room, the floor of which appears to be a rickety wooden plank, five feet wide, which extends the length of the room to a narrow hallway lying 15 feet to the north. The wooden platform sits a foot above the actual stone floor of the rest of the room, which is littered with rusted bits of metal, and broken crates and boxes molding in a morass of ruddy yellow muck.

The small room at the base of the ladder is the mad tinker's refuse pit, where discarded experiments and trash are thrown, to be dealt with by the ochre jelly. The spaces to either side of the platform are considered difficult terrain.

Quick-thinking characters can scavenge scraps of wood from the debris field to use as improvised clubs. A character using an improvised club takes a -4 penalty on attack rolls and inflicts 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

Tactics: Characters searching the refuse or poking around in the debris attract the ochre jelly's atten-

tion, as will any creature actually entering any of the spaces to either side of the plank. Once engaged, the ochre jelly fights to the death, and will pursue victims beyond this room into area 1-4, but not back up the tube.

During combat, any time a character rolls a natural 1 an attack roll, he needs to make a DC 10 Balance check to avoid falling prone from the walkway into one of the adjacent spaces. Characters must also make this Balance check if the ochre jelly inflicts a critical hit during combat.

Ochre Jelly: CR 5; Large ooze; HD 6d10+36; hp 69; Init -5; Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 4, touch 4, flat-footed 4; Base Atk +4; Grp +10; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (2d4+3 plus 1d4 acid, slam); Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft., SA acid, constrict (2d4+3 plus 1d4 acid), improved grab; SQ blindsight 60 ft., split, ooze traits; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref -3, Will -3; Str 15, Dex 1, Con 22, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10.

Acid (Ex): An ochre jelly secretes a digestive acid that dissolves only flesh. Any melee hit or constrict attack deals acid damage.

Constrict (Ex): An ochre jelly deals automatic slam and acid damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an ochre jelly must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Split (Ex): Slashing and piercing weapons and electricity attacks deal no damage to an ochre jelly. Instead the creature splits into two identical jellies, each with half of the original's current hit points (round down). A jelly with 10 hit points or less cannot be further split and dies if reduced to 0 hit points.

Aftermath: Once the ochre jelly has been dispatched, the group can search the debris unimpeded. A DC 25 Search of the northeast corner of the debris reveals a *wand of obscuring mist* (13 charges), two *potions of blur* and 25 gold pieces hidden among the smashed remains of an old crate.

Area 1-4 – The Tool Shed (EL 5): When the party can view this area, read the following aloud:

The tunnel opens into a wide chamber with worked stone walls and floor. The chamber stretches 30 feet east to west, and 20 feet north to south. A thick patch of clay and grout rimes marks the edges of a wide stone circle set into the western wall, near where the tunnel connects to the room – it looks like a giant stone plug was set into the wall, possibly sealing off a former tunnel. Similar stone plugs appear along the northern and eastern walls.

Even more odd than the stone plugs, however, is the shiny metal building erected in the northwest corner of the room. The small metal shed stands just over 6 feet tall, 15 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Heavy rivets and scorch marks show where the wide sheets of metal were joined together to form the walls and roof. A reinforced metal door sits in the center of the southern face of the shed. A stout chain is looped around the door's ring and a ring mounted into the side of the shed, held fast with a gleaming steel lock.

Exploring the Tool Shed: The small building is Claren Cogwheel's maintenance and tool shed. The shed contains several defunct, broken and abandoned experiments, as well as a variety of tools like shears, wrenches, saws and socket sets. Some of the tools are animated, and will attack if disturbed.

Izzlebit, an imp and one of Claren Cogwheel's assistants, is sleeping on top of the shed. Unless players climb the shed or can see on top of the structure, he is virtually impossible to detect. Since he is sleeping, Izzlebit suffers -5 on his Listen checks to hear the party. If the group is making a lot of noise (such as when trying to gain entrance into the shed, knocking through a stone plug in one of the walls, or if combat ensues) Izzlebit will wake up immediately.

The large padlock requires a DC 20 Open Lock check to unlock. Otherwise, Izzlebit the Imp has a brass key that opens the padlock. The door is not trapped. The door or chain can also be destroyed to gain access to the tool shed.

Heavy Chain: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 10; break DC 26.

Lightly Reinforced Metal Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 8; hp 50; break DC 25.

Once the party gains access to the tool shed and can view the interior, read the following aloud:

The walls of the small shed are cluttered with metal shelving, riveted into the walls at regular intervals. All manner of tools line the shelves – hasps, saws, wrenches, screwdrivers, hammers, picks and more. There is a wide selection of tools from a variety of crafts and disciplines, from heavy duty gear suitable for carpentry or stonework to the delicate instruments of a jeweler or engraver.

A small chair is resting upside down over a barrel in the corner, the seat of the chair covering the opening of the barrel. The size of the chair and spacing of the shelves makes it appear they were designed for someone of small stature.



A DC 25 Spot check reveals a set of Small size gloves hung on a peg by the wall immediately inside the doorway. These gloves are magically enchanted (abjuration) to allow the wearer to pick up and use the animated tools within the barrel without aggravating them. The gloves only work on these specific animated tools and are otherwise unremarkable, but worth 50 gp as a curiosity to a collector of magic trinkets.

Aside from standard tools and equipment, a DC 20 Appraise check of the gear on the shelves allows a character to identify the following: a set of masterwork thieves tools, masterwork artisan's tools, a magnifying glass, an hour glass, a masterwork Craft (construct) tool kit and masterwork Craft (trap-making) tool kit.

The barrel holds the remains of Claren Cogwheel's first failed prototypes of his clockwork rat, as well as some spare parts. The barrel also contains several animated tools that came to life during Claren's mad experimentation. If the barrel is disturbed or the chair is removed, the tools attack. A character wearing the magic gloves by the entrance can grab a tool with a successful melee touch attack. A tool held with the magic gloves becomes inert as long as it is held, but resumes activity if dropped or let go.

On the top shelf on the eastern wall are three small boxes wrapped in blue silk. They match the gift box found in Eriash Endleman's shop, and each contains a small wheel of Creshire Blue cheese. Anyone opening one of the boxes must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1d3 minutes from the pungent smell of the cheese.

Tactics: The animated tools are mindless, seeking only to snip, cut or carve anything nearby. The animated tools will pursue targets outside the shed, but will not travel outside the room. The animated tools fight to their destruction.

If Izzlebit wakes up before the party enters the shed, he turns invisible and waits for them to enter the shed or leave the room, then attacks from behind. Ideally, he lurks and waits for the party to engage the animated tools before attacking. Izzlebit focuses on any good-aligned characters first. Once reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, Izzlebit attempts to turn invisible and flee.

Animated Masterwork Chisel, Hammer, Screwdriver and Tongs: CR 1/2; Tiny constructs; HD 1/2d10; hp 4 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp -9; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d3-1, slash); Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA sharp edge; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 5, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: None

Sharp Edge (Ex): The screwdriver and chisel each have a critical threat range of 19-20.

Animated Masterwork Saw: CR 1; Small construct; HD 1d10+10; hp 16; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d4/19-20, slash); SA bleeding cut; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 5, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -5; Str 10, Dex 12, Con -, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: None

Bleeding Cut (Ex): If the animated saw scores a critical hit in combat, the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for 1d3 rounds from blood loss. A DC 15 Heal check or any healing effect that heals hit point damage stops the blood loss.

Izzlebit the Imp: CR 2; Tiny outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 3d8; hp 19; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft.; AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp -5; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee (1d4 plus poison, sting); Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA poison (DC 13 Fort, 1d4 Dex/2d4 Dex), spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 5/good or silver, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 5; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +8, Hide +17, Knowledge (engineering) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +7, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks); Dodge, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Infernal.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day – *suggestion* (DC 15). Caster level 6th. Once per week an imp can use *commune* to ask six questions. The ability otherwise works as the spell (caster level 12th).

Alternate Form (Su): An imp can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast on itself (caster level 12th), except that an imp does not regain hit points for changing form, and an individual imp can assume only one or two forms no larger than Medium. Common forms include monstrous spider, raven, rat, and boar.

Possessions: Brass key to the toolshed.

The Sealed Tunnels: The stone plugs along the western and northern walls are sealed off tunnels which once led to the homes and businesses of several of Claren Cogwheel's other victims. The tunnels have been collapsed and sealed – no amount of work short of a full mining operation will make them navigable. However, a group dedicated to removing the stone plugs (requiring a DC 25 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 30 Strength check) can at least see the rough path of each tunnel, and a DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom check reveals that two victims were found roughly in the same direction as these tunnels.

Enterprising GMs can also use these tunnels as adventure hooks to tie in other city or subterranean scenarios – providing a means to access sewers or other underground encounter areas.

The stone plug on the eastern wall is only loosely set, and functions as a secret door leading into the next area. A DC 20 Listen check near the eastern edge of the room reveals the faint sound of wind whistling through the edges of the plug, and indicates a large, hollow expanse beyond the plug. This plug only requires a DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 20 Strength check to open.

Prying the stone plug loose will cause it to suddenly pop out of place and fall into the room, possibly crushing a careless character (+ 10 attack, 3d6 damage). A DC 18 Search check makes a character aware of the danger, and a DC 22 Disable Device check allows a character to safely remove the plug. If the group exceeds the necessary DC checks to open the seal by 5 or more, the trap gains a +2 circumstance bonus on its to hit roll.

Collapsing stone plug: mechanical; event trigger (prying open door); no reset; Atk collapsing stone plug +10 melee (3d6); Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 22.

Area 1-5 – The Spiral Stairwell (EL 5): When the party reveals the doorway leading to this area, read the following aloud:

The hole in the wall reveals a 10-foot-wide stone corridor leading eastward 30 feet, where the stone wall meets up with burnished metal plates that form a giant spiral stairway that slowly corkscrews down into the depths. The wide steps and central pillar have a distinct mechanical look to them, adorned in countless minute cogs, gears and levers. A gentle tick-tick-ticking can be heard from the massive stairwell.

The wide spiral stairway corkscrews twice as it descends 30 feet below ground, leading to Claren Cogwheel's workshop.

There is a trap trigger at the halfway point, which causes tanglefoot glue to jet out of nozzles along the steps in the center of the stairwell. The following round, a *lightning bolt* trap is triggered, arcing up the stairs, likely striking those stuck in the tanglefoot glue.

A DC 18 Listen check allows characters on the stairwell to hear the whirring and crackling of the trap activating, as it starts to build up its electrical charge. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) identifies the implications of the sound, and affords characters so informed with a +2 circumstance bonus on Reflex saves against the trap.

Four spaces across the stairwell are part of the tanglefoot trap. The *lightning bolt* trap is located at the base of the stairwell. The special construction of the stairwell allows the *lightning bolt* to race up the entire width of the stairs – all creatures on the stairwell are subject to the trap, and the *lightning bolt* stops at the threshold to the stairs.

Tanglefoot Glue Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +6 ranged touch (entangled, DC 15 Reflex or glued to floor); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20 (cut wires).

Lightning Bolt Trap: CR 4; magic device; mechanical trigger (tanglefoot trap triggered previous round); automatic reset; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 electricity, DC 16 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Remember that characters entangled by the tanglefoot glue suffer -4 to their Dexterity, and thus will have reduced Reflex saves against the *lightning bolt*. Further, any characters that failed their save against the tanglefoot glue and are stuck to the floor suffer an additional -2 to their Reflex saves against the *lightning bolt*. Finally, creatures wearing medium or heavy armor made of metal, or wielding two-handed weapons made primarily of metal suffer -2 on their Reflex saves against the trap.

Area 1-6 – The Tinker’s Workshop (EL 7): The stout wooden door leading into the workshop is closed, but not locked. A DC 17 Listen check at the door reveals the sounds of metal ringing on metal, hammering, and other sounds of craftsmanship on the other side of the door.

When the party opens the door to this room, read the following aloud:

A wide room stretches 50 feet from east to west, the edges of the room covered with all manner of shelves, work tables and tool stands. A half dozen chairs and work stations appear to be set up here and there. You spy a small, dark spot on the wall in the northwest corner of the room, behind a padded chair. A large glass jar, reinforced with gold and silver bands, lies on a table opposite the door, something large suspended in the thick, milky liquid inside the jar.

Three burly, haggard forms sit at workstations, hammering away at small cogs, gears and wiring strewn across the table tops. A fourth, smaller figure, is writing on paper rolled out on a table along the north wall. When the door opens, this gnome looks up, as if expecting you, and shouts wildly at his workers.

“They would stop my most important work! They seek to destroy what we have created – what I have created! Stop them! Kill them!”

Claren Cogwheel and three hired duergar workers are in the workshop, building clockwork rats. If the group triggered the trap, the workers are ready and can’t be caught off guard. If the group avoided the trap, the workers need to make a DC 15 Listen check or be surprised in the first round of combat. Claren begins in the space marked C on the map, while the duergar workers are in the spaces marked with D’s. The dark spot on the wall to the northwest is the escape route leading to area 1-7.

Tactics: If the duergar go before the characters in the first round, they will use their *enlarge person* ability on themselves. Otherwise, the duergar move to flank and whittle down weaker party members, but focus on dwarf characters before any other targets. The duergar all fight to the death.

On the first round of combat, Claren Cogwheel blows the silver whistle on his neck, which summons 3 clockwork rats from the shelf marked with an X on the map. Claren Cogwheel attacks spellcasters over other targets, knowing they can more easily overcome his damage reduction with magic. Claren shouts to the duergar to help him flank spellcasters so he can use his sneak attack ability.

Once reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, Claren Cogwheel screams out for the duergar to protect his genius, and bolts for the escape hatch in the northwest corner, which leads to area 1-7. If he makes it to the hatch, he sets a quick trap at the bottom of the slide in area 1-7 for anyone pursuing him.

The clockwork rats enter combat during the second round. If any characters were affected by the Creshire cheese in area 1-2, the rats attack those targets. Otherwise, they attack the nearest characters. The clockwork rats fight to the death.

Duergar War2 (3): CR 2; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 2d8+7; hp 21, 18, 13; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/x3, masterwork warhammer); SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., duergar traits, light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +1 (+3 metal and stone objects), Craft (blacksmithing) +3, Craft (stonemasonry) +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Spot +2; Toughness.

Languages: Common, Undercommon, Dwarven.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day – *enlarge person* and *invisibility* (4th level caster); these abilities affect only the duergar and whatever it carries.

Light Sensitivity: Duergar are dazzled in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: Masterwork warhammer, chain shirt.

Clockwork Rats (3): CR 1; Small construct; HD 1d10+10; hp 17, 15, 14; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA razor bite; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 1/–, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con –, Int –, Wis 3, Cha 1.

Feats and Skills: Balance +6, Climb +8; Weapon Finesse.

Razor Bite (Ex): If a clockwork rat scores a critical hit in combat, the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for 1d3 rounds from blood loss. A DC 15 Heal check or any healing effect that heals hit point damage stops the blood loss.

Claren Cogwheel, the Mad Tinker (Exp2/Rog2): CR 4; Unique Medium humanoid (gnome, construct, unique); HD 4d6+8; hp 26; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, short sword); SA sneak attack (+1d6); SQ damage resistance 3/–, evasion, gnome traits (+2 save vs. illusions), limited construct traits, low-light vision, resistances (cold and acid 5), spell-like abilities; trapfinding; AL LE; SV Fort +2,

Ref +5, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +9 (+11 blacksmithing and tinkering items), Craft (alchemy) +4, Craft (blacksmithing) +9, Craft (tinker) +9, Hide +9, Intimidate +6, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Spot +8, Tumble +6; Dodge, Mobility.

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day – *speak with animals*.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Draconic, Gnome.

Limited construct traits: Claren Cogwheel has replaced some of his organs and flesh with gears and wheels, but is not yet a full construct. However, Claren is considered a construct for any abilities, spells or feats that would affect constructs (such as a ranger's favored enemy bonuses, or +1 *construct bane* arrows). Claren's construct traits include:

- +4 to saves against all mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects).
- Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromancy effects.
- Cannot heal damage on his own, but can be repaired through the use of the Craft Construct feat.
- Not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or energy drain.
- Does not need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

Possessions: Short sword.

Description: *On better view of the crazed gnome in the corner of the room, you realize something odd in his appearance. The glint of metal can be seen through gaps in his scalp, and his arms and legs bulge with overlarge joints. The gnome's movements are jerky and halting, which add an unsettling edge to the insane glint of evil in his eyes.*

Aftermath: The large jar on the table across from the door holds the severed head of Dimble Donnagan, suspended in a solution of *gentle repose*. Despite his hatred and rage, Claren Cogwheel feels some pity for Dimble's death, and has been hoping to some day find a way to resurrect him – hoping Dimble will reveal to the Gnomecrafter's Guild that Claren was not at fault, and restore him to the guild. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) identifies the head and the target's association with the Gnomecrafter's Guild, providing some insight into what has been going on.

The tables and wall have schematics showing how to make clockwork rats, which the Gnomecrafter's Guild will reward the group mightily for – the plans are worth 500 gold to the Gnomecrafter's Guild, but may fetch up to 1,000 gold on the black market.

There are also schedules and notes to indicate the next three targets. The room contains more than enough clues to link everyone to members of the Gnomecrafter's Guild.

A DC 25 Search check of the desk where Claren Cogwheel was writing reveals a secret compartment. The compartment is locked but not trapped, and can be opened with a DC 25 Open Lock check. Claren has the key to the compartment in his pocket.

Inside the drawer is a masterwork set of craftsmens tools (tinker), a pair of *goggles of minute seeing*, one jar of *universal solvent*, one vial of *sovereign glue* and a deep green spinel worth 300 gold.

When Claren has been defeated, either here or in Area 1-7, close inspection of his body reveals the horrors of his transformation – Claren had slowly been replacing parts of his own aging body with cogs and gearwork so he and his plans could live on. This sort of travesty is anathema to the Gnomecrafter's Guild.

Area 1-7 – The Escape Hatch (EL 5): If the battle is going poorly, Claren Cogwheel will jump into the hole behind the chair to escape. Otherwise, after the battle, as the characters search the area, they will discover this escape route behind a stuffed chair on the western wall.

The hatch is a small, smooth tunnel, and a small metal "sled" with a system of ropes and pulleys mounted into the ceiling. The tunnel has been treated with grease, and any character getting on the sled will be whisked away at high speeds for several hundred feet down a long shaft, to where the shaft empties out into a sewer section below the poor section of town.

A DC 10 Spot or Search check reveals the grease. A character entering the shaft must make a DC 13 Reflex save or fall down inside the greased tunnel and speed their way to the room at the bottom.

The swift descent down the sled requires a DC 15 Fortitude save to keep from getting dizzy – failing the Fortitude save results in becoming sickened for 1d6 rounds. Travel without the sled is not nearly as rapid, and requires only a DC 12 Fortitude save to avoid becoming sickened – however, without the sled, there is no mechanism to stop a character's descent. After plummeting the entire distance, a character will slam into the sled waiting at the bottom of the tunnel, taking 4d6 bludgeoning damage and 4d6 subdual damage from the combined impact and fall down the chute.

At the base of the tunnel, there is a small cradle to hold the sled. Attached to the sled through pulleys

mounted in the ceiling is a system of ropes a character could use to pull himself up the tunnel while lying on the sled, and back into the lab. This requires a DC 5 Strength check.

This is how Claren Cogwheel gets in and out of his workshop unseen. A quick search reveals other similar tunnels through the sewer system leading to tubes connected to the other murder victim's homes or businesses – this is another place where Claren sent off his mechanical rats to kill the other members.

Tactics: If Claren Cogwheel escaped from area 1-6 via the tunnel, he has spread caltrops over the greyed out spaces on the map. Confronted down in this area, Claren feels trapped and will fight to the death. He blows his silver whistle during round one, summoning 2 clockwork rats from the sewer depths to join him, which appear on the spaces marked X on the map during the second round of combat.

The clockwork rats attack the nearest target, or any target affected by Creshire Blue cheese earlier in the adventure. The clockwork rats fight to their destruction.

Clockwork Rats (2): CR 1; Small construct; HD 1d10+10; hp 17, 15; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +0; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA razor bite; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 1/–, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con –, Int –, Wis 3, Cha 1.

Feats and Skills: Balance +6, Climb +8; Weapon Finesse.

Razor Bite (Ex): If a clockwork rat scores a critical hit in combat, the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for 1d3 rounds from blood loss. A DC 15 Heal check or any healing effect that heals hit point damage stops the blood loss.

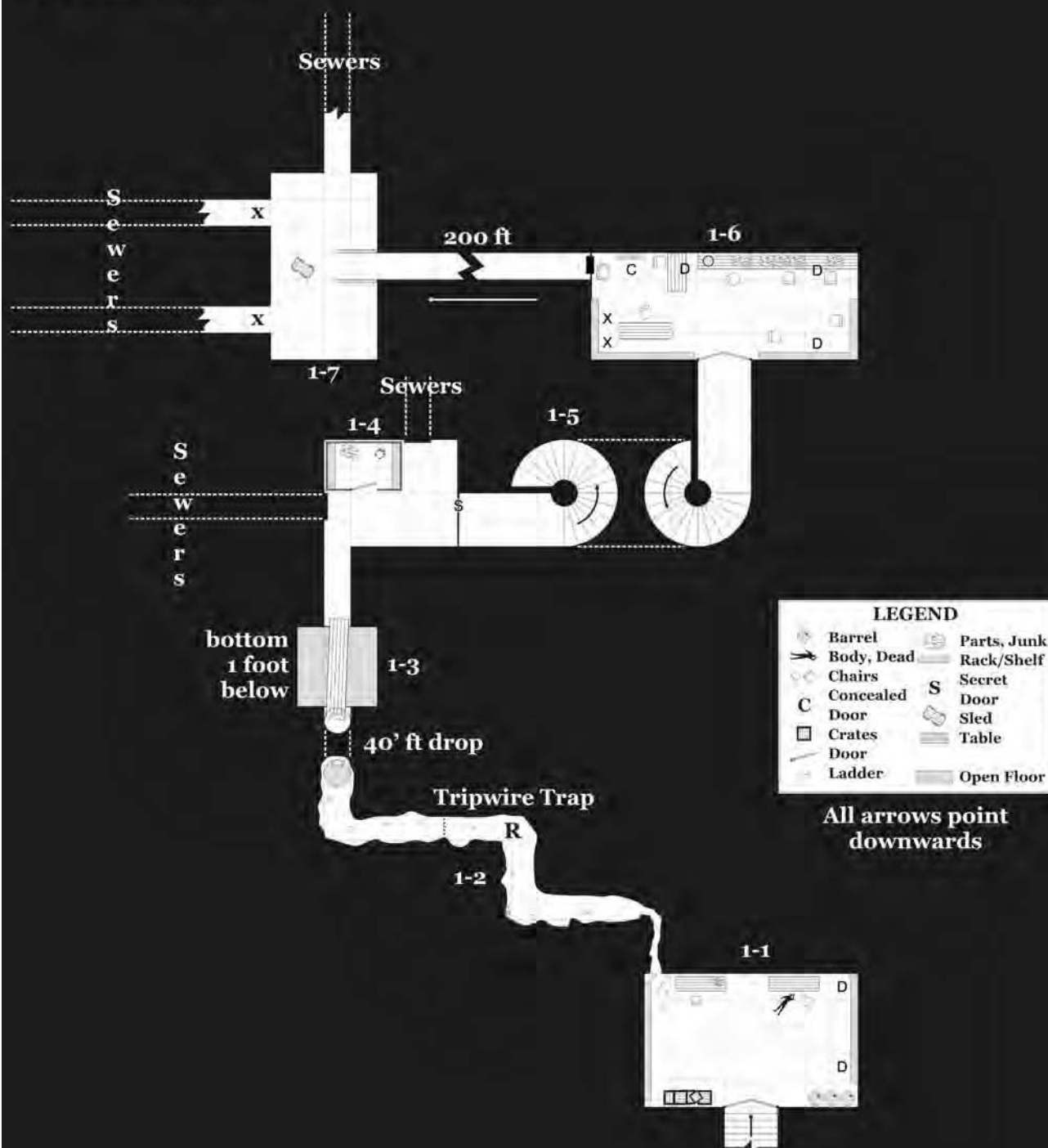
Aftermath: With the defeat of Claren Cogwheel, the threat to the Gnomecrafter's Guild is ended. The party has enough evidence to present to the local authorities and the Gnomecrafter's Guild to detail Claren's revenge plot and reassure the gnomish community.

For defeating Claren Cogwheel and unraveling the mysterious deaths, each character is rewarded with 250 gold, a flask of alchemist's fire and a flask of *silversheen*.

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Like Clockwork

1 square = 5 feet



RSC

Dungeon Crawl Classics

The Crawling Tower

By Phillip Larwood

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the good old days, when adventurers were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was a dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

The Crawling Tower is designed for four to six PCs of 5th–6th level. A good mix of characters and races is best for meeting the various challenges found in the tower, but the party should include at least one wizard or sorcerer and a few good melee combatants. Characters with good ranks in Climb, Jump, and Tumble will also shine. The Scaling the Adventure section gives hints on how to tailor the module to meet the requirements and playing style of your group. The setting can be modified for any campaign setting, though the default setting for the adventure is the world of *Æreth*, the Dungeon Crawl Classics setting introduced in *DCC #35: Gazetteer of the Known Realms*.

Adventure Summary

On their way to a dungeon, tomb, or similar location, the PCs are passing through the village of Harrowglen (or a similar large village in your campaign world) during the day of a large fair. As they enjoy the sights before their trek out into the wilds, they spot a tower that appears to be climbing over a hilltop. Among screams of the locals, the tower continues its advance, massive spider-like legs supporting the tower as it crawls towards the village. As it nears the fair, the tower disgorges a flock of *vargouilles*, which shriek and dive on the villagers. It is up to the PCs to stop these *vargouilles*, then enter the tower and stop its diabolic master before the massive construct can continue its rampage.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a

trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | PG | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------------|-----------|-------------|---|-----------|
| Village | 133 | C | Vargouilles (4) | 6 |
| 1-2 | 135 | C | Vargouille | 2 |
| 1-3 | 135 | C | <i>Ghaskal Boddertock</i> , gnome Wiz7 | 7 |
| 1-4 | 136 | C | Vargouille | 2 |
| | | T | <i>Sepia snake sigil</i> trap | 4 |
| 1-6 | 136 | C | <i>Conjuring cabinet</i> | 1-4 |
| 1-8 | 137 | C | Vargouilles (2) | 4 |
| | | T | Sassone spray trap | 4 |
| 1-9 | 139 | C | Soap golem | 7 |
| 1-10 | 139 | C | Mesmerdrake | 6 |
| 1-11 | 140 | T | Moving machinery and steam | 5 |
| 1-12 | 141 | C | <i>Xolkiak</i> , chain devil Mnk2 | 8 |
| | | T | <i>Teleport</i> trap | 6 |

Scaling Information

This adventure is designed for 4–6 PCs of 5th–6th level, but can be modified for weaker or stronger parties as detailed below.

Weaker Parties (level 4 or lower, or three or fewer PCs): The simplest way to reduce the threat of the tower is to halve the number of vargouilles whenever more than one appears. Remove 1 or 2 wizard levels from Ghaskal in area 1-3. In area 1-6, the *conjuring cabinet's* third compartment is broken (thus making it less of a threat and a less powerful magic item at the same time), and in area 1-9, reduce the soap golem's Hit Dice by 4, or replace the mesmerdrake in area 1-10 with a pair of shocker lizards or a single cockatrice. In area 1-12, remove the *dimension door* trap on the tower controls, and remove Xolkiak's monk levels.

Stronger Parties (level 7 or higher, or seven or more PCs): As with weaker parties, the addition of a few vargouilles to each encounter involving the nasty creatures is the best way of making the adventure more difficult. In area 1-3, give Ghaskal another few levels of wizard. The sassone spray trap in area 1-8 could be replaced with a more lethal poison with a higher CR rating. In area 1-9, give the soap golem 4 additional Hit Dice, and give 3-6 additional Hit Dice to the mesmerdrake in area 1-10. Give Xolkiak in area 1-12 another level or two of monk.

Another way of making the adventure more challenging without increasing its difficulty is to have the PC at less than full strength or ill-prepared for the tower when it appears. This option comes with some risks though, as PCs might shy away from entering the tower at all.

Getting the Players Involved

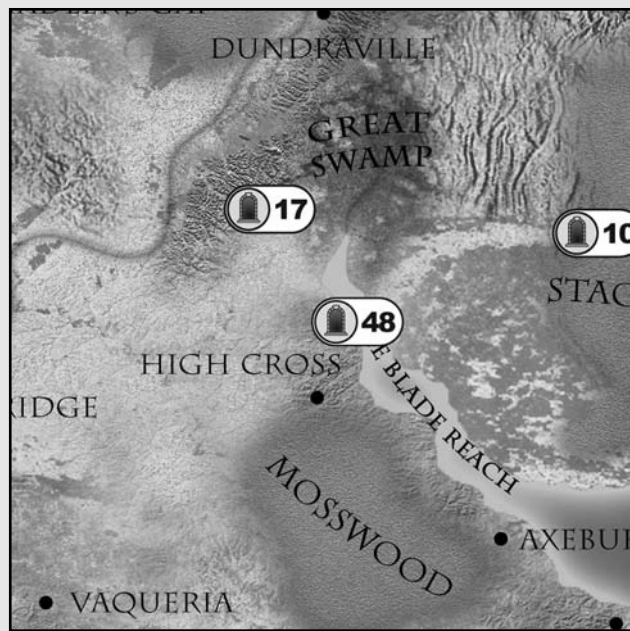
The simplest way of getting the PCs involved is to place them in the action immediately. To make sure that the PCs are ready to face the challenge of the tower, they should be rested and prepared for adventuring. Ideally, they should be heading out of the village on their way to a nearby adventure site, such as *DCC #10: The Sunless Garden*, or *DCC #23: The Sunken Ziggurat*. The attack on the village by the vargouilles should give the PCs enough of an impetus to enter the tower and deal with the horrors that lie therein.

Background Story

Barkasha the Red was an eccentric archmage who enjoyed taking the delights of home with her when she went adventuring. Originally, Barkasha relied on *secure shelter* or *magnificent mansion* spells for this purpose, but after a few of her enemies dispelled her homes (once while she was taking a bath), she decided on a more permanent solution. Barkasha constructed a mag-

DCC World

The town of Harrowglen would have long ago faded from the roster of sages were it not for the strange eldritch tower once sighted stalking the nearby hills. Constructed atop long legs of burnished steel and copper, the mysterious tower is rumored to have once been the home of the mighty magister Barkasha the Red, but both the tower and its mistress have been missing for the past two decades.



ical tower that would uproot itself upon command and travel about the land on large arachnid-looking legs of burnished steel and copper.

Barkasha took her tower everywhere she went, and soon it became a fairly common sight to see her tower crawling across the plains and forests towards some dangerous location. Barkasha's great journey ended when she investigated the ruins of an ancient city and was petrified by a colony of abyssal greater basilisks, leaving her tower free to be explored by whoever wandered past.

The first unfortunate group to breach the tower (the magical wards upon the entrance slew all of the previous creatures trying to enter) was a simple group of hobgoblin mercenaries. The mercenaries explored the tower, vandalizing or stealing Barkasha's treasured possessions until they came upon her dressing room. There the mercenaries discovered several bottles of brandy, which they consumed. Drunk and looking for things to smash, the hobgoblins turned their aggression towards Barkasha's prized *mirror of life trapping*, taking up their axes and shattering it with a few blows. Much to their horror, the hobgoblins' efforts released a pair of vargouilles, an evil gnome illusionist named Ghaskal Boddertock, and a chain devil named Xolkiak, who turned their attentions towards the mercenaries. While the vargouilles were happy to transform the mercenaries into more of their foul kind, Ghaskal simply fled and hid from the fiends, and Xolkiak plumbed the secrets of the tower and eventually found the controls for moving it.

Since then, Xolkiak has been moving the tower from village to village to terrorize the inhabitants and allow the vargouilles to create yet more of their kind. Ghaskal (from his hiding spot) seeks some way of getting rid of the creatures once and for all so he can use the tower to punish the gnome community that banished him.

Player Beginning

Harrowglen's annual fair is a time of joy and optimism for the normally sedate villagers, and the air is filled with laughter and song as you make your way through the milling crowds. The aroma of roasted venison competes with the flashing conjurations of a nearby wizard. Strangely enough, the fair has coincided with your latest foray into the unknown, and it seems a fitting send-off.

As you prepare to leave the village behind, a scream rends the air, followed by another, and you see the agitated figures of several villagers pointing towards a nearby hill. Following their gesticulations, you see a massive tower of gray stone crest the top of the hill and come scuttling down towards the village on massive

legs of burnished steel. The tower resembles a hideously malformed spider, with a gray cone-shaped abdomen and long, metallic legs.

Just when you think the sight cannot get any more horrifying, four winged shapes emerge from the tower's windows and swoop down over the villagers. At first glance, the creatures look like huge bats, but as they draw nearer, you can see that they are the severed heads of monstrously bloated hobgoblins, with leathery wings for ears, and eyes that burn with hellish, green fire.

At this point give the players handout A.

The winged monsters are four vargouilles intent on spreading fear and panic amongst the villagers for their chain devil master.

Development: Villagers kissed by the vargouilles most likely begin transforming into vargouilles themselves over the course of the next 24 hours once night falls. PCs that succeed on a DC 16 Knowledge (the planes) check are aware of this and can administer *remove disease* spells to the victims. But they do not have long before Barkasha's tower begins moving again. If it seems that the PCs are ignoring the tower, the local lord (or someone of similar power) approaches and begs them to stop the threat posed by the tower before more monsters come out of it.

Tactics: The vargouilles start 100 feet away from the players. They pass over the heads of the villagers to allow their scream to paralyze as many folk as possible, then fly down and begin kissing paralyzed targets until there are none left. If the PCs target the monsters with spells or missile attacks, the vargouilles focus on them instead, attempting to kiss any paralyzed comrade of the attackers and biting those who are ambulatory. The vargouilles are fearless and stupid, and attack until destroyed.

Vargouilles (4): CR 2; Small outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +1; Spd fly 30 ft. (good); AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp -3; Atk/Full Atk +3 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite); SA shriek, kiss, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide +11, Intimidate +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Spot +5; Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

Shriek (Su): Instead of biting, a vargouille can open its distended mouth and let out a terrible shriek. Those within 60 feet (except other vargouilles) who hear the shriek and can clearly see the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed with fear for 2d4 rounds or until the monster attacks them, goes out of range, or leaves their sight. A paralyzed creature is susceptible to the vargouille's kiss (see below). A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by

the same vargouille's shriek for 24 hours. The shriek is a mind-affecting fear effect. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Kiss (Su): A vargouille can kiss a paralyzed target with a successful melee touch attack. An affected opponent must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or begin a terrible transformation that turns the creature into a vargouille within 24 hours. See the MM for details.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 12 or be unable to heal the vargouille's bite damage naturally or magically. A *neutralize poison* or *heal* spell removes the effect, while *delay poison* allows magical healing. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +1 racial bonus.

Entering the Tower

Once the vargouilles begin their attack, Xolkiak stops to enjoy the spectacle, setting the tower down just outside of town and retracting its spider-like legs. While he is annoyed about the vargouilles' defeat, he stays for another minute or two to watch what the PCs do next before leaving. If they look like they are approaching the tower, he allows them to enter before uprooting the tower and flipping the switch to close the iron shutters over the windows and door. With the PCs trapped, Xolkiak leaves the village behind, and the tower marches across the fields towards the nearby forest (or other uninhabited area).

Soaring to over 70 feet in height and with a diameter of over 45 feet, the tower is constructed of close-fitting blocks of magically hardened superior masonry. With its spider legs fully extended the tower gains another 25 feet in height and towers above most other structures (including most castles and keeps). The tower has only one entrance (a normal strong wooden door, unlocked), but five arched windows (all shattered by the vargouilles or mercenaries) pierce the second floor.

When activated, the tower sprouts eight articulated spider-like legs of copper and steel. The legs enable the tower to travel over virtually any terrain with a movement rate of 60 feet (or 120 feet as a full-round action). The tower can remain operational for 8 hours, after which the internal machinery needs time to cool down (a process taking roughly another 8 hours). The tower can move across almost any terrain, and can even enter an area of impassable or difficult terrain, such as deep bogs, dense rubble, or heavy undergrowth, at half speed.

The crawling tower maintains full mobility until it loses 2 or more of its legs. Once this occurs, its movement slows down to 40 feet. Once 4 legs have been destroyed, the tower's movement slows down to 20 feet. At this point, Xolkiak retracts the remaining legs and waits for the attackers to enter.

Magically Treated Superior Masonry Walls (5 foot

section): 1 ft. thick; hardness 16; hp 180; break DC 55; Climb DC 20.

Strong Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 23.

Tower Legs: AC 8; hardness 20; hp 100 each (8 total); break DC 60.

Inside the Tower

The interior of the tower is little different from the outside in terms of material and construction. Interior doors are all strong wood, while the walls are all magically treated superior masonry covered with a thin layer of white limestone plaster. Unless otherwise noted, all floors in the tower are covered with a thick, luxurious red carpet (adds a +2 circumstance bonus to Move Silently checks).

Unless otherwise noted, most areas of the tower are dimly lit with permanent rose-colored *dancing light* spells (CL 9th) in the rough shape of hooded lanterns. Ceiling heights throughout the tower are 15 feet except for area 1-11.

Escaping the Tower

As soon as all the PCs have entered the tower, iron hatches slam down over the windows and entrance, barring any escape. The hatches are treated as locked iron doors.

Iron Hatches: 2 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 60; break DC 28.

Even if the PCs get the hatches open, they must still escape the tower while it is in motion. From the ground floor, the tower is roughly 30 feet off the ground (3d6 fall), while from the second floor windows the distance is around 60 feet (6d6 fall). In addition, those jumping from the tower have a chance of being trampled by the legs after they hit the ground, and must succeed on a DC 20 Reflex save or take 4d6+15 damage as the legs crush them underfoot. The difficulty of getting the hatches open and surviving a jump from the tower should convince PCs that they need to stop the tower moving first.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Tower Foyer: Read or paraphrase the following:

This small room is bare except for a pair of open wooden doors on the walls and a lantern-shaped manifestation of rose-colored light that floats near the ceiling. A threadbare green rug covered with dried mud lies just past the entrance.

As you step through the door, a mouth with pearly white teeth and full, ruby lips appears on the far wall and speaks in a husky, feminine voice. "Welcome, visitors. Before proceeding, kindly take off your boots and sheathe your weapons. Thank you."

A permanent *magic mouth* (CL 10th) has been cast on this chamber and repeats this passage every time a person or group of people steps through the door. The magic mouth speaks in a clear, rich voice and thus has a good chance of being heard by the other creatures on this level.

Area 1-2 – Dining Chamber (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The centerpiece of this chamber is a mahogany table with a covered silver serving tray and a number of silver utensils. The serving tray and utensils gleam faintly in the reddish light of the chamber, the polished silver contrasting with the thick burgundy carpet that covers the floor and the dark stained wood of the table.

This chamber is where Barkasha ate her meals. With its accoutrements, the chamber conveys some of the loneliness that the archmage experienced, and now holds a dangerous surprise for the PCs.

Shortly after Xolkiak took control of the tower, one of the vargouilles discovered Ghaskal hiding out here and attacked him. The wizard managed to trap the vargouille beneath the silver serving tray's cover, and escaped into area 1-3. While a single vargouille is only mildly dangerous for a party of 5th-6th level PCs, this encounter is designed to shock the PCs more than hurt them and alert Ghaskal to their presence.

Ghaskal has cast an *illusionary wall* in this chamber to cover up the door to area 1–3. Anyone searching the wall automatically discovers that it is an illusion. The *illusionary wall* is marked on the map with a dotted line, and the door beyond is treated as a secret door (DC 20 Search check) unless the illusion is dispelled or a PC succeeds on a Will save to disbelieve it (DC 18).

Treasure: The silver serving tray is worth 75 gp, while the silver utensils are worth a total of 30 gp.

Tactics: As soon as someone lifts off the lid of the silver serving tray, the vargouille trapped underneath spreads its wings and shrieks before attacking. As with all of the vargouilles in the adventure, it fights to the death.

Vargouille: see stats on page 133.

Area 1-3 – Ghaskal's Hideout (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

This small chamber contains a simple cot, a plate of half-eaten food, and a lantern of glowing, rose-colored light floating in the air. The chamber stinks of fear and sweat, and might have once been the bedroom of an apprentice or servant.

This once served as the bedroom of Barkasha's former apprentices. Ironically enough, Barkasha's last apprentice now hides out in this chamber until he can come up with a way of getting rid of Xolkiak and the vargouilles.

Barkasha's last apprentice is Ghaskal Boddertock, a gnome illusionist with a penchant for sadistic jokes and killing small, burrowing animals just for fun. Barkasha trapped Ghaskal in her *mirror of life trapping* after he tried to stab her with a poisoned dagger. There he waited helplessly until the mercenaries shattered the mirror and released him.

After being released, Ghaskal fled for his life, but did not flee the tower. Realizing that Barkasha must be dead, he decided to take control of the tower for his own nefarious schemes. Unfortunately, the vargouilles and chain devil did not leave the tower, and he now hides out here until he can come up with a good plan for disposing of them.

Ghaskal is a rather short gnome with a pudgy nose, acne scars, and watery blue eyes. He dresses in faded, blue robes and a black cap adorned with silver stars. Ghaskal does not have his spellbook, and so has had to rely on his Spell Mastery feat to get his spells back. Because of this, his spell selection is limited to those spells still left over from when he was trapped (minus those he has cast since then) and those spells that he can get back with the feat.

Tactics: Ghaskal casts *invisibility* and *levitate* and uses his *wand of mage armor* on himself (factored into the statistics below) when he hears the PCs, and positions himself above the doorway, 10 feet above the floor. As soon as the PCs enter, he casts *summon monster III* using his *lesser silent metamagic rod*. Ghaskal repeats this tactic on the following round, then, once the party is engaged with his summoned monsters, he casts *mass reduce person* on the group. Ghaskal follows this up by casting *phantasmal killer* on a strong-looking fighter and recasting *invisibility* on himself.

If Ghaskal's summoned monsters are killed, he uses his *scroll of dimension door* to flee to area 1–5. If he manages to escape, he casts *invisibility* again and hides, dogging the PCs steps in the hope that they'll

do his dirty work for him. If he thinks the PCs suspect his presence, or once they have disposed of the vargouilles and Xolkiak, he uses his illusions (which don't render him visible if used defensively) to make the PCs waste spells before attacking with his wand or another *summon monster III* spell. If Ghaskal is cornered, he fights to the death.

Ghaskal Boddertock, male gnome Wiz(III)7: CR 7; Small humanoid (gnome); HD 7d4+14; hp 33; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp -2; Atk +3 melee (1d3-1/19-20, dagger); SA spells; SQ gnome traits, low-light vision, summon familiar (none currently); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +6 (+8 against illusions); Str 8, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Craft (alchemy) +12, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +3, Spellcraft +18, Survival +1 (+3 on other planes, +3 underground); Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (Illusion), Spell Mastery (*invisibility*, *phantasmal killer*, *summon monster III*).

Wizard Spells Prepared (Caster Level 7th; 2*/3*/5/4/2): 0 – *arcane mark*, *ghost sound* (DC 15); 1st – *shield*, *silent image* (x2) (DC 16); 2nd – *invisibility* (x4), *levitate*; 3rd – *major image* (DC 18), *summon monster III* (3); 4th – *mass reduce person* (DC 17), *phantasmal killer* (DC 19).

Spell-like Abilities: 1/day – *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 9), *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals* (burrowing mammals only). Caster level 1st.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Gnome.

Possessions: small masterwork dagger, *ring of protection* +1, *wand of color spray* (25 charges), *wand of mage armor* (3rd) (22 charges), *lesser silent metamagic rod*, *scroll of dimension door*, 2 tanglefoot bags, 43 gp.

* Ghaskal has fewer spells prepared than normal because he doesn't have his spellbook and has cast a few spells since escaping the mirror.

Area 1-4 – Tower Library (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This long, curved chamber appears to be a library. Dark, mahogany shelves line both walls of the chamber and are filled with a number of books. More books lie strewn across the deep red carpet, as do the remnants of a vase and the withered plant it once held. Another door lies opposite from the door you just came through.

This was Barkasha's personal library, though she kept most of her important books in a secured hidden vault located far from the tower (in case it was ever taken

from her). The hobgoblin mercenaries disturbed the library as they came through it, and passing vargouilles have since knocked down more books.

A lone vargouille flies about his chamber, occasionally knocking books off their shelves. It is far from quiet, but attempts to hide atop one of the bookshelves until it can swoop down on the PCs and attack them.

Trap: Barkasha's old spellbook (see below) is trapped with a *sepia snake sigil* on the opening page. The sigil lashes out at the first person to read the book. Thankfully, Barkasha placed the sigil on the book when she was a much lower level wizard.

Sepia snake sigil trap: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*sepia snake sigil*, 5th-level wizard, DC 14 Reflex negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Treasure: The collection in this library is worth 500 gp and includes books on such topics as engineering, herbalism, geography and the planes. Also located in the chamber is a slim volume covered in ratty blue leather, and another volume in faded red leather (both of which can be located with a DC 5 Search check). The first book is Barkasha's spellbook from when she first began her career. The second book is Barkasha's diary. The volume details the red wizard's life and adventures, including the construction of the tower. When PCs read through the diary, give them Player Handout B.

Barkasha's Spellbook: 0 – all; 1st – *identify*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *unseen servant*; 2nd – *daze monster*, *scorching ray*; 3rd – *blink*.

Tactics: The vargouille uses the same tactics as the rest of its kind in the tower.

Vargouille: see stats on page 133.

Area 1-5 – Ladder Room: This chamber is unremarkable aside from a wooden ladder that goes up through a circular hole in the ceiling. The ladder leads up to level 2, but does not extend through to level 3 (the entrance to this level is through area 1-11). The room above is identical (except the hole is in the floor, not the ceiling).

Despite being a powerful wizard, Barkasha enjoyed keeping fit and saw climbing up and down the ladder to be just the sort of exercise she needed.

Area 1-6 – Conjuring Chamber (EL varies): Read or paraphrase the following:

A dim, red light suffuses this quiet chamber, giving it a strange, otherworldly quality. A stone circle takes up much of the floor, and within this cir-

cle has been etched a triangle, the corners of the triangle meeting up with the edges of the circle. Glowing, yellow arcane runes are outlined in the spaces between the circle and the triangle, and the area seems charged with potency. Across from these magical diagrams is a large, ornate darkwood cabinet with three doors.

This was where Barkasha conjured the spirits of various elementals and outsiders and bound them to her service. Xolkiak was summoned here and served Barkasha for a time before she imprisoned him in her mirror.

The magic circle and triangle, while menacing, are not the dangers in this room, but are impressive nonetheless. They both radiate faint abjuration and conjuration magic, but are not inherently magical themselves. The glowing runes are showy, but have no game effect. If a PC studies the runes, a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check points them out as being useful for the magical binding of various creatures.

The cabinet beyond the magic circle is a rare type of magic item known as a *conjuring cabinet*. While the term loosely describes any small cabinet used by second-rate wizards or charlatans in their acts, Barkasha's version summons creatures. Unfortunately, while simply opening one of the doors summons a monster, the creature cannot be controlled unless the operator knows the command word. Otherwise, the monster acts the way any normal member of its type would until it is banished, slain, or the duration of the summoning expires.

Opening the left, middle, or right door of the cabinet summons a monster from the *summon monster I*, *summon monster II* or *summon monster III* table, respectively. See the MM for creature stats. All creatures stick around for five rounds before vanishing, and none are under the control of the characters. A new monster is summoned each time a cabinet door is opened.

Treasure: The only treasure in this chamber is the *conjuring cabinet* with 25 charges remaining. This magic item is described in more detail in Appendix A. There is nothing stored within the cabinet.

Tactics: The monsters are not under the control of the PCs and fight either until they are killed or until their summoning expires, five rounds later.

Area 1-7 – Ransacked Bedroom: Read or paraphrase the following:

A simple yet comfortable-looking bed and a wooden chest are the only furnishings in this room, though a beautiful full-length tapestry of a remarkably familiar tower perched atop a hill



in a moonlit forest takes up most of one wall. An open door lies opposite from the one you have opened.

Someone or something has obviously ransacked the room. The chest has been overturned and lies open on the floor. The bed has also been searched, and appears to have been jumped on by someone wearing big dirty boots.

Barkasha used this room as her bedroom, but kept few things of any real value here. The hobgoblins ransacked this room before they met their doom in area 1-8, and one of them took the time to jump up and down on Barkasha's bed.

Treasure: The tapestry is worth 300 gp. The hobgoblins took the rest of the treasures in this room.

Area 1-8 – Ransacked Dressing Room (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

The headless corpses of four humanoid creatures clad in studded leather lie upon the plush, red carpet of this chamber. The smell of rotting flesh is somewhat stunted by the aroma of expensive perfume emanating from several spilled vials. The corpses lie amid the wreckage of a shattered mirror, shredded clothing and wood paneling, and appear to have died where they fell.

Aside from the corpses, two large, mahogany wardrobes, a mahogany dressing table and chair, and the frame of a large, oval mirror take up the rest of the room. The mirror's pane now lies upon the floor in pieces and one of the wardrobes has been opened up and emptied of clothing. Another door exits this chamber, but is closed.

Once serving as Barkasha's dressing room, this chamber has become a tomb for the four hobgoblins transformed into vargouilles, their headless bodies rotting on the ground. The rest of the room is in shambles, with most of Barkasha's expensive clothing torn and bloodied by the hobgoblins and her expensive perfumes and lotions emptied out and wasted. Most of the clothing is in some shade of red, and is not the sort of clothing one would typically wear adventuring.

The *mirror of life trapping* no longer radiates any magic, but anybody examining the mirror that makes a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check can tell that the mirror was once enchanted.

Two vargouilles (in fact, the two original vargouilles from the mirror) hide in this chamber and wait for unsuspecting creatures to come by. Each of these

vargouilles has slightly more hit points than normal, though this does not change their CR.

Treasure: A search of the hobgoblins' bodies reveals a pair of morningstars, a pair of longswords, a silver dagger, and 56 gp. Each of the corpses also wears studded leather armor and carries a light wooden shield.

The last drawer of the dressing table is locked (Open Lock DC 25; break DC 13) and was not opened by the hobgoblins. While it is easier to simply yank the drawer open, this has a 25% chance of breaking one of the items it contains (randomly determined). The drawer contains some useful magic items, but is also trapped.

Sassone Spray Trap: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger (opening the drawer); manual reset; spray attack +12 ranged touch; poison (sassone leaf residue, DC 16 Fort negates, 2d12 hp/1d6 Con); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20.

The drawer contains *universal solvent* in a maroon jar, an *elixir of love* in a rose glass vial, an *elixir of fire breath* in a beaker of crimson glass, and a *potion of tongues* in a scarlet-tinted flask.

Conjuring Cabinet

These large cabinets are nearly always made out of darkwood and covered with ornate designs. All *conjuring cabinets* have three separate doors or compartments, though rumors persist of more powerful *conjuring cabinets* with four or more compartments. About half of all cabinets have wheels to allow their owners to more easily move them about.

Opening one of the doors or compartments on a *conjuring cabinet* without speaking the command word summons a monster from the appropriate *summon monster* list to attack the opener (the summoned creature appears in a spot adjacent to the opener or in the closest available spot). This uses up one or more of the cabinet's charges, and is a feature built into the cabinet to prevent unauthorized usage (though wizards have also used these magic items as traps). Creatures summoned in this fashion attack the opener and those around him until destroyed or the normal duration of the summoning spell expires.

If the command word for the cabinet is spoken prior to opening one of the doors, the opener can pick which creature is summoned from the appropriate *summon monster* list and can place it anywhere within 35 feet of the cabinet. The creature then attacks the opener's enemies to the best of its ability. The cabinet does not give the opener the ability to speak with the summoned creature, but the opener can dismiss the monster as normal.

Conjuring cabinets have 100 charges when they are first made, but most found in dungeons have far fewer charges due to creatures or adventurers opening up the doors and summoning random hostile monsters. The left-hand door of a typical cabinet uses up 1 charge and summons a monster from the *summon monster I* list. The middle door uses two charges to summon a creature from the *summon monster II* list, and the right-hand door summons a creature from the *summon monster III* list with the use of three charges. Summoning a creature is a standard action, and as soon as a creature is summoned the cabinet automatically closes (unless forcibly kept from doing so).

Nothing can be stored within a *conjuring cabinet*.

Faint Conjuration; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *summon monster I*, *summon monster II*, *summon monster III*; 27,000 gp; Weight 150 pounds.

Tactics: The vargouilles hide in wait atop the wardrobes and begin screaming as soon as the PCs enter. If all the PCs are paralyzed, the vargouilles kiss as many as they can before the paralysis wears off; otherwise they just use their bite attacks.

Vargouilles (2): hp 8, 9; see stats on page 133.

Area 1-9 – Deadly Bubble Bath (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

Parts of this chamber are cordoned off with dark red curtains, complimenting the blood red tiles covering the floor. A large semicircular bathtub fills up most of this chamber, but the bathtub's contents are obscured beneath a sea of soapy bubbles that rise up out of it and spill across the floor.

Barkasha enjoyed the luxuries of life more than just about any other mage and always kept herself meticulously clean. This bathroom is a reflection of the space her amenities took up, and the bathtub alone could fit four or five people. The curtained-off area is a covered privy with a red, lacquered wooden lid. The privy is actually the portal to a small extradimensional space (little bigger than a typical *bag of holding*), which contains Barkasha's waste.

Barkasha's personal hygiene was exploited more than once by one of her enemies. After an embarrassing incident when her *magnificent mansion* was dispelled and she was attacked while naked in her bathtub, she created a rare type of guardian construct called a soap golem, which remains in this chamber. The soap golem lashes out at anyone who approaches the bathtub, the cloud of soapsuds suddenly replaced by a man-sized creature made out of glistening white soap.

Tactics: The soap golem lashes out with its soapy limbs in an attempt to smash the PCs, while saturating the ground around it with slippery residue. It continues to attack until reduced to 10 hit points or less, whereupon it assumes its suds cloud form and waits until fully healed before resuming the attack. The soap golem does not flee and does not follow creatures outside this chamber.

Soap Golem: CR 7; Medium construct; HD 7d10+20; hp 58; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d8+4, slam); Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+4, 2 slams); SA blinding strike, grease; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 5/slashing, dark-vision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision, suds cloud; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +11, Swim +12.

Blinding Strike (Ex): If a soap golem scores a critical hit against an opponent, the creature gets soap in its eyes and is automatically blinded for 1d4 rounds. This ability does not work against constructs, plants, oozes, undead, or creatures without eyes.

Grease (Ex): The soap golem constantly extrudes a slippery residue, which gives it a +10 bonus on Escape Artist checks and coats a 5-foot-radius of the floor around the creature. Any creature in an adjacent square to a soap golem must make a DC 13 Reflex save or fall prone, just as if affected by a *grease* spell.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A soap golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the golem, as noted below.

Acid attacks such as *acid storm* deal full damage to a soap golem, and a *disintegrate* spell does 5d6 points of damage regardless of the save. A *grease* spell cast on a soap golem heals it for 10 hit points, while a jar of *universal solvent* hurled at the creature deals 10d6 points of damage if it hits.

Suds Cloud (Su): Once per day as a standard action, a soap golem can transform itself into a cloud of soapsuds or bubbles. This ability functions exactly like the *gaseous form* spell, and the soap golem gains fast healing 2 while in this form. The soap golem can resume its normal form as a free action.

Treasure: Lying in the bathtub is the body of the mercenary leader, the unfortunate hobgoblin pummeled to death by the soap golem. The leader wears a suit of +1 *chainmail* and carries a masterwork light steel shield, a masterwork longsword, and a pouch filled with 107 gp and 5 red spinels worth 100 gp each.

Area 1-10 – Private Garden (EL 6): read or paraphrase the following:

Opening the door, you are greeted by the sight of a beautiful tropical garden filled with lush green vegetation, including ferns, flowering vines, and strangely twisted trees. The marble statue of a pixie or similar creature stands not far from the doorway, while further in the garden is a fountain with a statue of a satyr blowing water out of his pipes. It is impossible to tell whether the garden has any other exits, as a dense layer of greenery covers the back wall. Crystal panels in the ceiling provide a yellow radiance akin to daylight, and two large windows on the outer wall are covered with iron hatches.

This private garden is where Barkasha sometimes

came to relax, enjoying the soft and subtle scents of the many plants or looking out from the tower's two windows at the passing world below. The plants in the chamber are real, and are kept alive by a complex magical watering system and the light from the ceiling panels.

The two statues are not magical, though the water coming out of the satyr's pipes and into the fountain is part of the watering system described above and radiates faint transmutation magic.

A secret door lies in the inner wall of this chamber and allows access to area 1-11. Finding the secret door requires a DC 25 Search check. Pulling on a length of fake liana vine opens up the secret door.

Aside from the plants, Barkasha also kept a mesmerdrake in this chamber as a dangerous sort of pet. The mesmerdrake has not been fed in months and is desperate for food, having long since polished off every other living creature in the garden.

Tactics: The mesmerdrake lurks amid the back wall of vegetation near the satyr fountain and waits for the PCs to step within striking distance before using its mesmerizing glare attack and activating its draining aura. It lashes out with its fangs and tail at any creature that engages it in melee, focusing on killing any PC not affected by its glare. Because it is cornered in this chamber, the mesmerdrake fights to the death.

Mesmerdrake: CR 6; Large magical beast; HD 6d10+18; hp 51; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, bite); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, bite) and +2 melee (1d4+1, tail lash); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA draining aura, mesmerizing glare; SQ camouflage, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Hide +3*, Listen +3, Move Silently +8, Spot +3; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy.

*The mesmerdrake gains a +10 circumstance bonus to its Hide check in areas of vegetation.

Camouflage (Ex): A mesmerdrake can blend in with its surroundings as long as there is a sufficient amount of vegetation present. This ability does not work in environments without vegetation (such as a desert or typical dungeon). The camouflage ability grants the mesmerdrake a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Draining Aura (Su): The mesmerdrake radiates an aura that drains the life force from living creatures within its radius. All creatures within a 10-foot-radius of the mesmerdrake take 1d6 hit points of damage for each round they remain within the aura.

The mesmerdrake does not gain any hit points from its aura, but it is the principal way it feeds on prey. There is no saving throw against the aura, and the mesmerdrake can quell or resume it as a free action.

Mesmerizing Glare (Su): All creatures within 30 feet of the mesmerdrake must make a DC 16 Will save or be transfixed for 1d6+2 rounds. Any creature transfixed by the glare is treated as being dazed. Any creature that makes its saving throw against the mesmerizing glare or has already been dazed once by it cannot be affected again by the same mesmerdrake for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting gaze attack.

Area 1-11 – The Works (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The noise echoing through this cylindrical chamber is a horrendous mishmash of crashing, grinding, and whirring that leaves little room for coherent thought. The sounds emanate from a collection of pistons, cogs, and gears of dark, oil-stained metal that pound up and down or spin in place to create a chaotic rhythm. Blasts of hot steam fill the air, their screams adding to wall of noise.

Several circular wooden platforms are suspended throughout this chamber, each platform connected by a series of metal chain ladders that sway back and forth in time with the tower's movements. Below you, the churning legs of the tower and the occasional flash of ground show you the dangers of falling. Above you, on the other side of the chamber, you can see a stone doorway.

This chamber contains the magical machinery used for moving the tower. The chamber is incredibly noisy, giving creatures a –10 penalty to Listen checks while they are here. It is also very hot, causing creatures to make a Fortitude save every 10 minutes to avoid taking 1d4 nonlethal heat damage and becoming fatigued. The motion of the tower is felt keenly in this chamber, and PCs must make DC 5 Balance checks every round to avoid falling prone. Grabbing onto something (such as a ladder) gives the PC a +5 bonus to the check, while failing the check by 5 or more means that the person must make a Reflex save (as described below) or fall off the platform and into the gears.

The chamber pierces through all three levels of the tower and is filled with wooden platforms connected to each other by 10-foot-high metal ladders formed out of chains. Climbing one of these ladders while the tower is moving requires a DC 15 Climb check. If a PC should fail the Climb check, she must make

a DC 10 Reflex save. PCs succeeding on this check fall back onto a platform, while those who fail end up falling down into the gears and legs of the tower, where they take 8d6 points of bludgeoning and slashing damage before they are spat out at the bottom. The PCs must navigate two platforms and climb two of these ladders to reach the other door (a total distance of 40 feet).

Anyone traversing this chamber is subject to being veritably attacked by the tower's machinery. For every 10 feet of movement that a PC makes in this chamber (vertical or horizontal) there is a 50% chance that he or she is attacked. If this occurs, roll on the following table to see what form the attack takes.

| 1d4 | Machinery | Effect |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Steam blast | 3d6 points of fire damage; Reflex DC 13 for half |
| 2 | Moving cogs | Atk +10 melee; 2d6+4 bludgeoning |
| 3 | Spinning blade | Atk +15 melee; 1d8+2 slashing |
| 4 | Rotating piston | Atk +20 melee; 1d6+1/19–20 piercing |

Attempting to damage the machinery in this chamber is a difficult process, but persistent PCs who manage to deal at least 200 hit points of damage to the interior workings cause the tower to shut down. The machinery (as a single object) has hardness 20; 200 hit points; and break DC 70.

Surviving and navigating this chamber is equal to overcoming a CR 5 monster.

Development: If the PCs retreat from battle with Xolkiak in area 1-12 and come back later, the chain devil waits for them in this room, making the battle extremely difficult.

Area 1-12 – The Devil's Playhouse (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

The door opens into a large, curved chamber that disappears out of sight around the corners of the tower. The chamber appears to be part attic, part laboratory, with tables containing alembics and retorts competing for space with rolled up rugs, a dismantled candelabrum, and various unopened crates. Ominous, blood-stained chains hang from the ceiling, and the area is lit by a strange, purple radiance.

This large, doughnut-shaped chamber served as Barkasha's laboratory and dumping ground for unused stuff, but also holds the controls for the

tower. The place is a mess (most of it not caused by the devil) and is filled with junk, including the candelabrum described above and crates containing candles, lengths of yarn, pewter cups, and other mundane objects. The alchemical equipment is in good condition and still contains a few dried reagents.

The control mechanism for the tower is a sphere of polished crystal that radiates an intense violet light and is mounted in a mahogany board attached to the wall. A quartet of flat, silver panels allows the controller of the tower to look out and survey the countryside, everything within a 90 degree arc in front of the tower being magically transmitted to the panels. The controller of the device can activate the tower's legs by simply putting his hands upon the sphere, and can move the tower by rotating the sphere in the desired direction. If the sphere is left unattended, the tower continues to move in the same direction it was last headed. Pulling on a wooden lever projecting out of the mahogany board retracts the legs and stops the tower from moving.

The first creature to emerge from Barkasha's mirror when it shattered was Xolkiak, a chain devil monk whom Barkasha had summoned to do her bidding before she betrayed and imprisoned him. When Xolkiak escaped, he quickly overcame the mercenaries and let the vargouilles have their way with the unconscious hobgoblins, while he explored the tower. When he came across the control room, Xolkiak was more than pleased, and set about playing around with the tower and moving it to different locations. Now he sees himself as the tower's master and enjoys destroying those he deems as lesser life forms. Xolkiak appears as a typical chain devil, a humanoid figure wrapped in chains with glowing, red eyes.

Trap: Anyone who attempts to destroy the tower controls activates a magical trap that teleports the attacker miles away from the tower. The mechanism is quite delicate (hardness 1; hp 5; break DC 10) and those who deactivate the trap can destroy it easily.

Teleport trap: CR 6; magic device; proximity trigger (attacking the tower controls); automatic reset; spell effect (*teleport*; 17th-level wizard, DC 17 Will save or teleported 1d10 miles from tower); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Treasure: The alchemical paraphernalia is worth 500 gp and weighs 40 lbs. The equipment is quite fragile and bulky, so it might take the PCs some time and effort to transport it safely. The alchemist's lab provides a +2 bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks. An unlocked wooden chest in the chamber contains



an assortment of old clothes, but hidden amongst them (Search DC 8) is a *headband of intellect* +2.

Tactics: Xolkiak is lurking in the shadows near the tower controls when the PCs enter the room. When they approach within range, he targets them with his *unnerving gaze* ability before animating four nearby chains and sending them out to attack. He makes liberal use of his *Climb* and *Tumble* skills to navigate through the chamber and attempts to face the PC one at a time. He generally sticks to using his chains in combat, but makes flurry attacks when desperate or cornered. If there is only a single PC remaining, he makes grapple checks to pin that PC before binding her in chains (for later torture).

Xolkiak does not back down from any confrontation and fights to the death.

Xolkiak, male chain devil Mnk2: CR 8; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 10d8+20; hp 65; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +9; Grp +17; Atk +13 melee (2d4+4/19–20, chain) or +13 melee (1d6+4, unarmed strike); Full Atk +13 melee (2d4+4/19–20, 2 chains) or unarmed strike +13/+8 melee (1d6+4, unarmed strike) or +11/+11/+6 melee (1d6+4, unarmed flurry of blows); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with chains); SA dancing chains, flurry of blows, unnerving gaze; SQ damage reduction 5/silver or

good, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immunity to cold, regeneration 2, spell resistance 18; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +10; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +15, Craft (blacksmithing) +17, Escape Artist +13, Intimidate +11, Listen +14, Spot +14, Use Rope +2 (+4 bindings), Tumble +9; Alertness, Deflect Arrows, Improved Critical (chain), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Tumble).

Dancing Chains (Su): A chain devil can, as a standard action, animate up to four chains within 20 feet. In addition, a chain devil can increase these chains' length to 15 feet and cause them to sprout razor-edged barbs. These chains attack as effectively as the devil itself. If a chain is in another creature's possession, the creature can attempt a DC 15 Will save to break the chain devil's power over that chain. If the save is successful, the chain devil cannot attempt to control that particular chain again for 24 hours or until the chain leaves the creature's possession.

A chain devil can climb chains it controls at its normal speed without making *Climb* checks.

Unnerving Gaze (Su): Range 30 ft., Will save DC 15 negates. A chain devil can make its face resemble one of an opponent's loved ones or bitter enemies. Those who fail their save take a –2 penalty on attack rolls for 1d3 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Regeneration (Ex): Chain devils take normal damage from silvered weapons, good-aligned weapons, or spells or effects with the good descriptor.

A chain devil that loses a piece of its body regrows it in 2d6x10 minutes. Holding the severed member against the stump enables it to reattach instantly.

Concluding the Adventure

If the party stops the tower without severely damaging it, possession of a mobile base of operations presents DMs with some interesting dilemmas. With the tower in their possession, PCs can travel pretty much anywhere in the world at great speed, and are thus able to traverse great distances in a surprisingly short amount of time. The upside of this is that the PCs can explore their world much more easily and can visit places that would otherwise take them months to reach. This allows DMs to throw in a wider assortment of adventures than normal, and can make the normal difficulties of travel a breeze.

On the downside, the tower attracts attention wherever it goes, and PCs may constantly need to thwart the efforts of bandits or monsters attempting to waylay it.

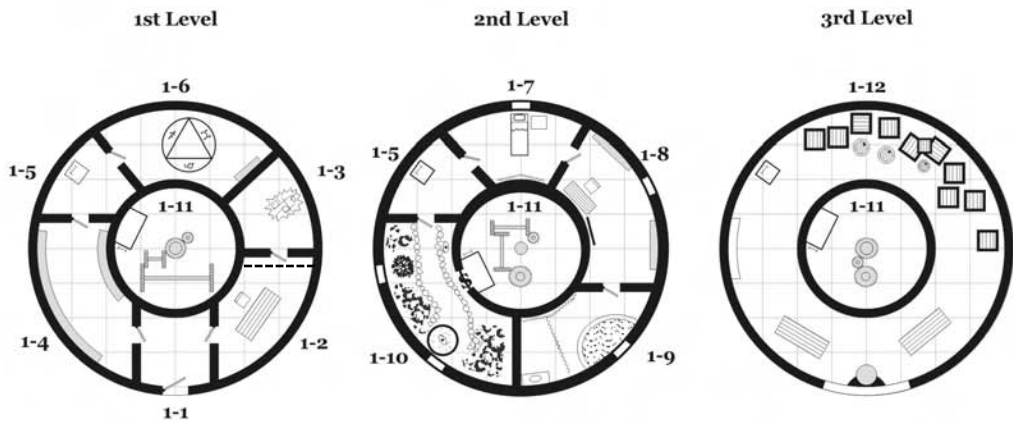
Regular cities and towns may also take umbrage with the PCs' mode of travel, and the appearance of the tower could bring the PCs to the attention of conniving nobles, corrupt city guards, or jealous wizards.

Aside from the opportunities that the tower presents, PCs may become interested in finding out what happened to Barkasha and where her more powerful treasures are kept. This may lead the PCs to the ancient elven ruins where the archmage met her end or to a hidden dungeon base where most of her wealth is secured.

ADVENTURE CONTINUES

The Crawling Tower

1 square = 5 feet





Trim along dotted line.

Permission granted to photocopy this page for personal use.

PCs reading through the diary find the following points of interest.

...The construction of the tower is almost complete. No longer will I need to leave the comforts of home to go exploring this wonderful land. My father once told me that I had the spirit of a wanderer and would never find a place of my own. Well, daddy dearest, now I have the best of both worlds.

...That cretin Ghaskal thought he could outwit me, but my mirror soon made a fool out of him. I hope he enjoys spending eternity with those pesky vargouilles and that stupid devil.

...The secret door to the works needs some oiling. It got stuck the other day. It must be the humidity of all those plants. A simple grease spell should fix the problem.

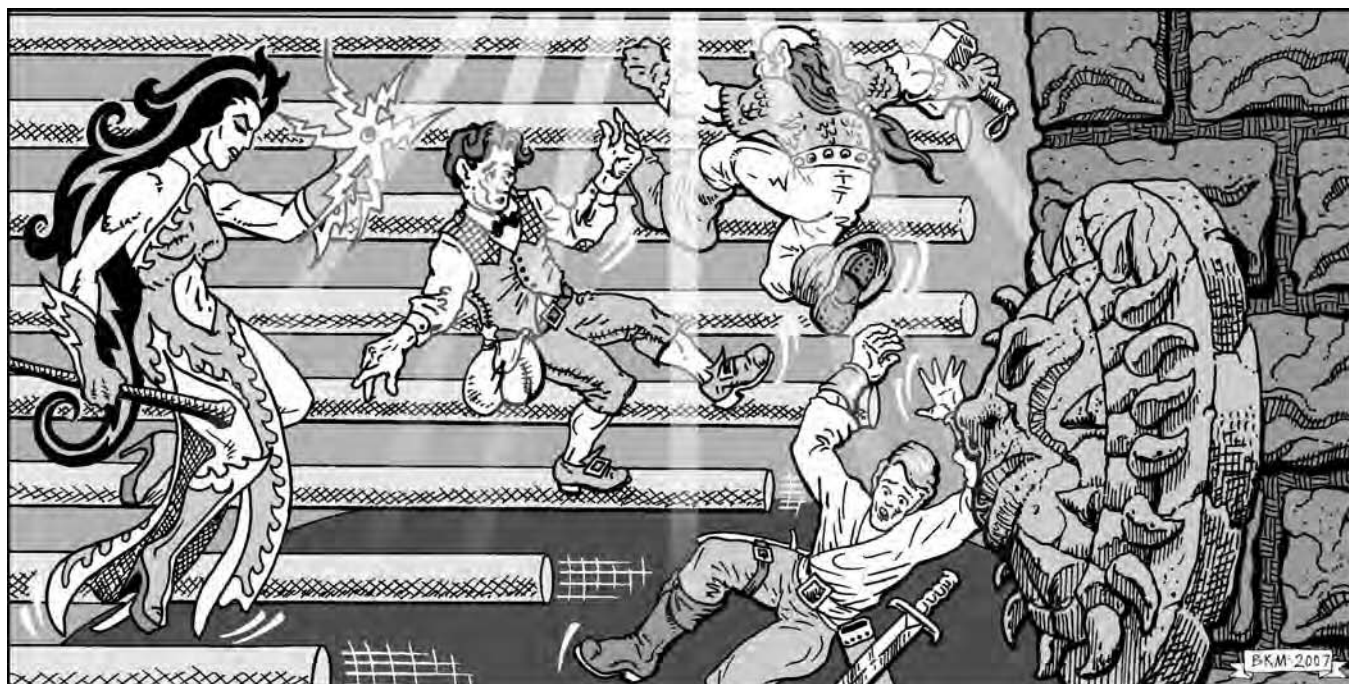
...The ruined elven city is an intriguing prospect. That old fool sage and his warnings won't deter me. If there's magic to be had in this city then it will be mine.

This ends the diary entries.

Dungeon Crawl Classics

Fortune's Folly

By Ed Gentry and Lara Gose
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Fortune's Folly is a puzzle and trap based adventure designed for four to six players of 4th level. While the characters can be of any basic character class, a mix that includes a rogue, wizard or sorcerer, and cleric or bard will be especially useful.

Adventure Summary

Every town has its share of notable eccentric citizens. But for one small town, one hundred twenty years ago, none were more eccentric than a man who came to be known simply as "Fortune." Known for his uncanny luck, Fortune amassed great wealth through shrewd trade and what some called an unnatural nose for the next

great deal. Said to be a stern but generous man, Fortune often preached the value of making one's own way in the world. Before his death, Fortune built himself an expansive tomb, making it widely known that the key to his fortune would be found by any bold enough to attempt to breach the tomb.

Game Master's Section

| <u>Loc</u> | <u>Pg</u> | <u>Type</u> | <u>Encounter</u> | <u>EL</u> |
|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1-1 | 147 | C | Centipede swarm | 4 |
| 1-2 | 147 | C | Monstrous spiders (3) | 4 |

Getting the Players Involved

The following hooks may help get the players involved.

Try your luck!: The legend of Fortune is well-known to the townspeople who, in carnival style, regularly challenge visitors to the task of penetrating the tomb.

Rogue's Gamble: The party's rogue gets a missive from her guild, informing her that it is time to retest her eligibility to the guild. The message instructs her to defeat the legendary traps of Fortune's tomb by any means necessary to ensure her continued membership.

The rogue will need help to do this, but what will she tell her comrades?

Faux Pas: Ignorant of the local customs, one of the characters accidentally gives great offense to one of the local magistrates who threatens a steep fine or imprisonment if the fine is not paid quickly. The players are approached by an NPC who informs them of the wealth to be found in the tomb.

Preliminary Skill Checks

Knowledge (history) DC 10: A local man, known as "Fortune," became the wealthiest citizen in the town's history over a century ago and built a magnificent tomb for himself.

Knowledge (history) DC 12: Before his death, Fortune issued a challenge to any other entrepreneurial spirits to plumb the depths of his tomb to make their fortune.

Knowledge (history) DC 15: To the best of anyone's knowledge, the tomb has never been plundered.

Knowledge (local) DC 10: Fortune was known as a stern but eccentric man who shared his wealth judiciously with those he found worthy. He admired boldness and sound judgment in others.

Knowledge (local) DC 15: Fortune was said to be an

avid reader, lover of puzzles and games, as well as fluent in multiple tongues.

Knowledge (local) DC 25: A local historian claims that Fortune was never seen without a silver earring and offers a vague description of a silver swirl in the shape of a snail shell with a gemstone at its center.

Knowledge (architecture and engineering) DC 25: An elderly citizen claiming to be the descendant of the engineer who designed the tomb describes stories of vast amounts of dirt being removed from the tomb during construction. She also remembers stories about an aqueduct system being installed in the complex as well as strange creatures being imported.

Player Beginning

As the players approach the structure, read or paraphrase the following:

Two miles outside of town, you find a well-maintained path in the dense forest. Knotted trees tower above you on either side, blocking most of the sunlight that would light your way. The sounds of small animals skittering through the underbrush catch your attention. The sickly sweet smell of pine and moldy leaves tickles your nose. Along the path, you occasionally see signs that others have come this way: flat stones encircling pits of ash, a broken arrow, a rusted tin plate. About two hundred yards later, the path opens up onto a clearing in which several large, gnarled and thorny rose bushes grow. Across the way, you see five ornate columns built into the base of a hill that rises before you. As you approach the columns, behind them you see an entryway into the tomb. Carved of the blackest basalt, the portal complements the dark veins in the marble of the richly carved columns.

The Tomb

The tomb structure is found in a dense wood on the edge of town, where it is built into the side of a hill. Where lush gardens once surrounded the tomb and an avenue of ash trees marked its entrance, the woods and underbrush have taken over except for a narrow path and some flowering shrubbery that the local citizens have maintained.

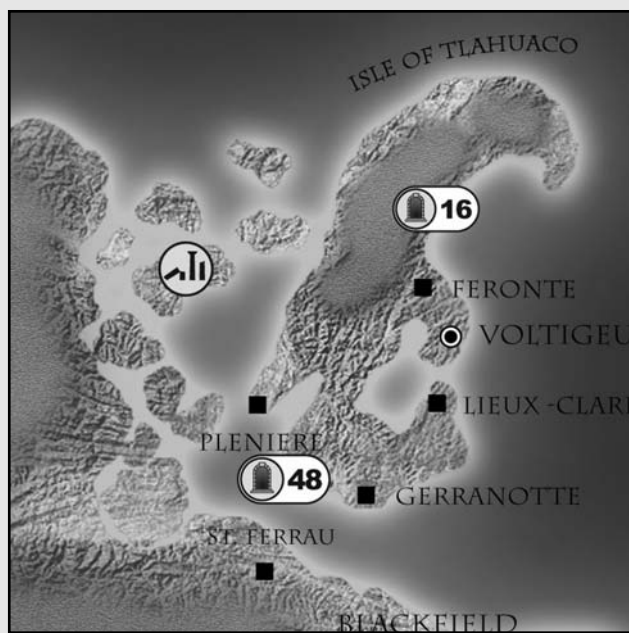
Doors and walls of this and future rooms have statistics as follows except where noted otherwise in the room description:

Reinforced masonry walls: 1ft. thick, hardness 8, hp 180, break DC 45, climb DC 15

Stone doors: 4 in. thick, hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28, lock DC 28

DCC World

The Tomb of the one known as Fortune is reputed to be found on the western coast of the Isle of Tlahuaco. Every winter locals from nearby villages hold a grand festival inviting the bold and foolish to chance Fortune's Tomb.



Areas of the Map

Area 1 – The Puzzle (EL 4): As the players enter the structure, read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter the tomb, you blink, expecting to adjust your eyes to darkness or the dimmest light, but instead you find yourself in a room imbued with the soft blue glow of arcane light emanating from floating globes placed at the center and four corners of the room that hover near the ceiling. The walls and ceiling are made from the same white marble as the columns outside. Some tree roots have managed to push their way into the room, creating cracks and fissures in the marble. On the wall before you is a large bas-relief carving in basalt with silver leaf, consisting of fifteen square tiles arranged four to a row. There is room for one more tile. On the floor, you find a few torches, and on the other walls you see some markings drawn in charcoal.

The carving on the wall is a slide puzzle which the players must solve (prepare handout A to distribute to players). The players must move the tiles taking advantage of the empty spot to produce a symbol that matches a corresponding symbol located high on the wall opposite the puzzle. Obscured by tree roots, the symbol can be seen with a DC 18 Spot check. If they made the preliminary check with the local historian, they get 1d6 extra rounds to solve the puzzle, which is the shape of Fortune's silver earring.

Once the first puzzle tile is moved, the symbol on the opposite wall begins to rotate incrementally. If the players do not complete the puzzle before the symbol reaches its 180-degree terminus ten rounds later, or if they attempt to break or remove tiles from the puzzle, a swarm of centipedes is released from the symbol's wall.

Upon completion of the puzzle, the tiled wall before the players slides open to reveal another room.

Centipede swarm (1): CR 4; Diminutive Vermin (Swarm); HD 9d8-9; hp 31; init +4; spd. 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14; Base atk/grapple +6/-; Atk/Full atk Swarm (2d6+poison); SA distraction, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, swarm traits, tremor sense 30 ft., vermin traits; AL always neutral; SV fort +5, ref +7, will +3; Str 1, Dex 19, Con 8, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills and Feats: Climb +12, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse

Area 2 – The Trap (EL 4): As the players enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

Through the dim arcane light you see an object dangling from the ceiling in the center of a circular room, surrounded by three small pits spread out underneath it in the flagstone floor. There are five identical doors, carved with strange runes, evenly spaced along the wall's perimeter, and the bones from at least two human skeletons are scattered along the floor between the doors.

Upon entering the room, the players see a large bucket close to the floor hanging by a chain from the ceiling with a small sand pit, a small gravel pit, and a small pool of water arranged on the floor in a triangular, equidistant fashion from the bucket. A DC 23 Trapfinding check will reveal the first row of large stones in the flagstone floor are trapped, set as a trigger to make the chain move up. When triggered, either by stepping on the trapped flagstone or by jostling the bucket, the chain pulls the bucket toward the twenty-foot ceiling at a rate of one foot per round. As the bucket rises, four doors set along the perimeter of the wall rise consequently at a rate of about two inches per round. A DC 13 Listen check will inform the players that there are creatures skittering behind the doors. A DC 15 Spot check will show them a monstrous spider behind each door if they peer under the growing space at the base of the doors.

The bucket may be held in place by the players with a continual DC 16 Strength check, forestalling the doors from rising further. If the bucket is released, the doors resume their ascent. If the chain is severed, the doors are triggered to open immediately, unleashing the monsters.

If the players attempt to fill the bucket with water, gravel, sand or any two in combination, the doors' progress is slowed but not stopped. Only when the players fill the bucket with gravel, then sand and finally pour water in to level will the device's progress cease and the fifth door open to provide an exit.

If the doors are opened, three monstrous spiders will attack (two large, one medium), coming from three of the four doors. If the players explore the area behind each of the doors, they will find three identical 10 foot by 15 foot rooms. The rooms are covered in webs and the walls are adorned with many small holes through which wandering vermin provided the spiders' food source, and a larger hole that allowed the spiders to leave the room into what seem to be tunnels throughout the entire structure. In the fourth room, the players will find the remains of another spider as well as a human, appearing to have been locked in combat until killing one another. A successful DC 12 Search check

of the human remains reveals rotting leather armor, a mace, 3d10 gp, and a *necklace of fireballs* (Type I).

Among the scattered bones on the floor in the main room, with a DC 12 Search check, the players will find a longsword, 2d10 gp, and a vial of *elixir of sneaking*.

Monstrous Spider, Medium (1): CR 1; Medium Vermin; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; init +3; spd. 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base atk/grapple +1/+1; Atk/Full atk Bite +4 melee (1d6+poison); SA poison, web; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremor sense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL always neutral; SV fort +4, ref +3, will +0; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +7, Jump +0, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse

Monstrous Spider, Large (2): CR 2; Large Vermin; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; init +3; spd. 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base atk/grapple +3/+9; Atk/Full atk Bite +4 melee (1d8+3 poison); SA poison, web; SQ darkvision 60 ft., tremor sense 60 ft., vermin traits; AL always neutral; SV fort +5, ref +4, will +1; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +3, Jump +2, Spot +4

Area 3 – The Arcane: As the players enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

The ambient arcane light is missing here, focused instead on a central dust-covered dais of marble rising three feet from the floor. Several items atop the dais glint in the light, drawing your eye. Outlines of old footprints can be seen in the dust on the floor.

After moving past the newly opened door, the players find themselves in a dark room with a shaft of light shining on a small dais before them. Atop the dais are five vials of liquid potions. A *detect*

magic spell and a Spellcraft check (with DC appropriate to each spell) will reveal the potion's school and strength. Tasting each potion may provide further information at the DM's discretion.

Potions:

Gaseous form (Spellcraft DC 18)

Haste (Spellcraft DC 18)

Detect secret doors (Spellcraft DC 16)

Bull's strength (Spellcraft DC 17)

Cure moderate wounds (Spellcraft DC 17)

Once a potion is removed or even jostled from the dais, the ten-foot ceiling of the room begins to descend at a rate of one foot per minute. Hand-sized "buttons" protruding from the four walls may be pressed one after another (in any sequence) to slow the ceiling's descent by half the rate.

Quaffing the *detect secret doors* potion will reveal a door on the far side of the room behind the false wall opposite the entrance. The false wall has the following statistics: 6 in. thick, break DC 25, hardness 8, hp 90, climb DC 20. A DC 20 Spot check reveals gaps and chinks in the mortar between the bricks of that wall.

Quaffing the *gaseous form* potion will allow a player to drift through the gaps in the false wall in order to trigger a lever to stop the ceiling permanently and open a door in the real wall behind the false wall, allowing the rest of the players through.

Quaffing the *haste* potion will more easily allow a player to depress the "buttons" in the room.

Quaffing the *bull's strength* potion will assist in breaking the false wall to get to the lever.

Area 4 – The Sun, the Moon, the Stars: As the players enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

Fortune

Fortune, earring of divination: AL CN; Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 13; Telepathy with wearer only (no speech); Ego score 9.

Personality: Identifying itself as the spirit of Fortune, this earring claims to wish to make its wearer wealthy and prosperous. The item seeks wealth at any cost, often endangering its wearer. Conversely, it understands that it cannot acquire wealth without a humanoid counterpart and usually tries its best to preserve the life of its wearer.

The object is a sentient magic item that communicates telepathically, which the players may consult on any circumstance-based check decision. The object has a sixty-four chance of providing good and bad advice respectively that results in a 1d10 bonus or reduction to any corresponding circumstance bonus or check (e.g., The players ask the object if it is safe to enter a certain cave. The DM calls for a bardic knowledge check for information on the cave. The DM then secretly rolls 20% using percentage dice, so the advice from the object is bad. The DM then rolls a '4' on a d10, so the DM secretly and automatically deducts 4 from the players' bardic knowledge check results. Eventually, the players may figure out that their luck with the object is truly random after it gets them into some sticky situations.

What seems like daylight pours forth from a huge, high-ceilinged room with no visible floor. A seemingly bottomless pit, its blackness impenetrable, occupies the center of the room. A ledge, visibly narrower on the sides to your left and right, skirts the pit. An elaborate carving of a sun the size of a child protrudes from the wall on your left.

The players stand on a platform at the entrance to a room with a high ceiling. The center of the room is an enormous pit with no discernable bottom. A narrow ledge runs along the walls from the platform to the opposite wall, connecting to another platform. DC 20 Balance checks every round will allow a player to skirt along the edge of the room.

Next to the players on the entrance platform is a stone carving of a sun built into the wall. A DC 15 Spot check will reveal scrapes and wear on the wall behind the sun, indicating that the carving can be turned 360 degrees. If turned, the carving will trigger a series of ascending stair-stepped shafts of stone (carved in gold-tinged marble to resemble sunlight) to erupt from the walls over the pit, that provide a path to halfway across the distance. The shafts will retract into the walls, beginning with the shaft closest to the players, at a rate of one per every two rounds. No check is required to step onto the first shaft, but a DC 15 Jump check (no running start; vertical and horizontal distance) is required for movement to each other shaft.

Upon reaching the final shaft of “sunlight” near the ceiling, a DC 10 Spot check reveals a carved moon above the players in the ceiling, similar to the carving of the sun at the entrance. Turning that carving will trigger shafts (carved in silver-tinged marble, resembling moonlight) to come forth from the walls in a descending pattern, leading the players to the far platform and door. These shafts function identically to the sun’s shafts. Turning the carving will also trigger crystalline structures to erupt from the ceiling. The light filtered through the crystals induces an effect of *vertigo* (as the spell). Players failing the saving throw risk falling into a thirty feet deep pool of water, one hundred feet below the mouth of the pit.

On the far platform, the players will find a door leading to the next room. The moon carving in the ceiling must have been turned for the door to open. If not, an Open Lock check (DC 18) is required to pass through the door.

Area 5 – What Remains: As the players enter the room, read or paraphrase the following:

From the entry, in the center of this octagonal room, you see a marble coffin embellished with



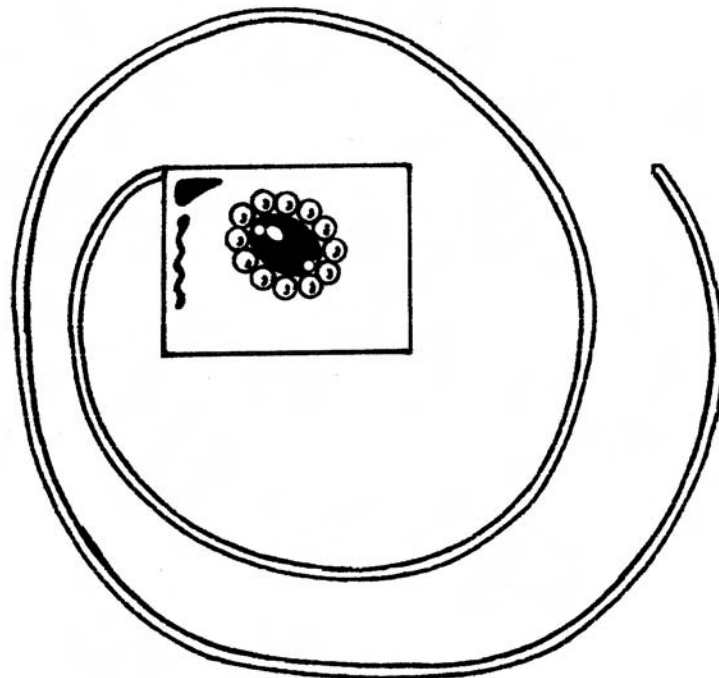
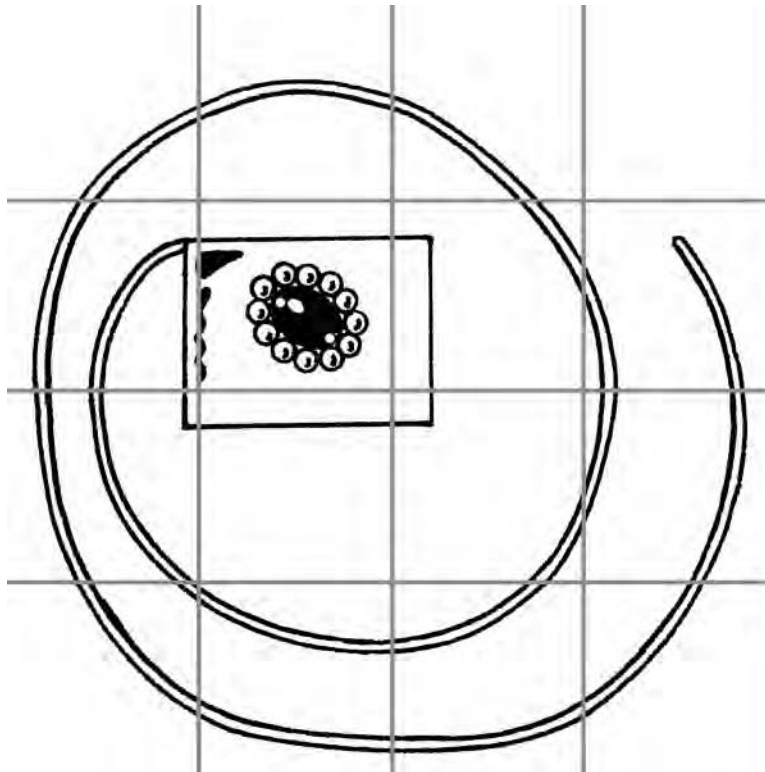
intricate carvings, which, upon closer inspection, appear to reproduce scenes from Fortune’s life. Most of the walls of the room are pure white marble, adorned with gold inlay. The wall directly opposite the entryway is made from a glistening black rock that is peppered with tiny flecks of copper that sparkle in the light. The gold inlay is repeated on this wall, used to inscribe the name that must have been Fortune’s in life before his nickname took hold.

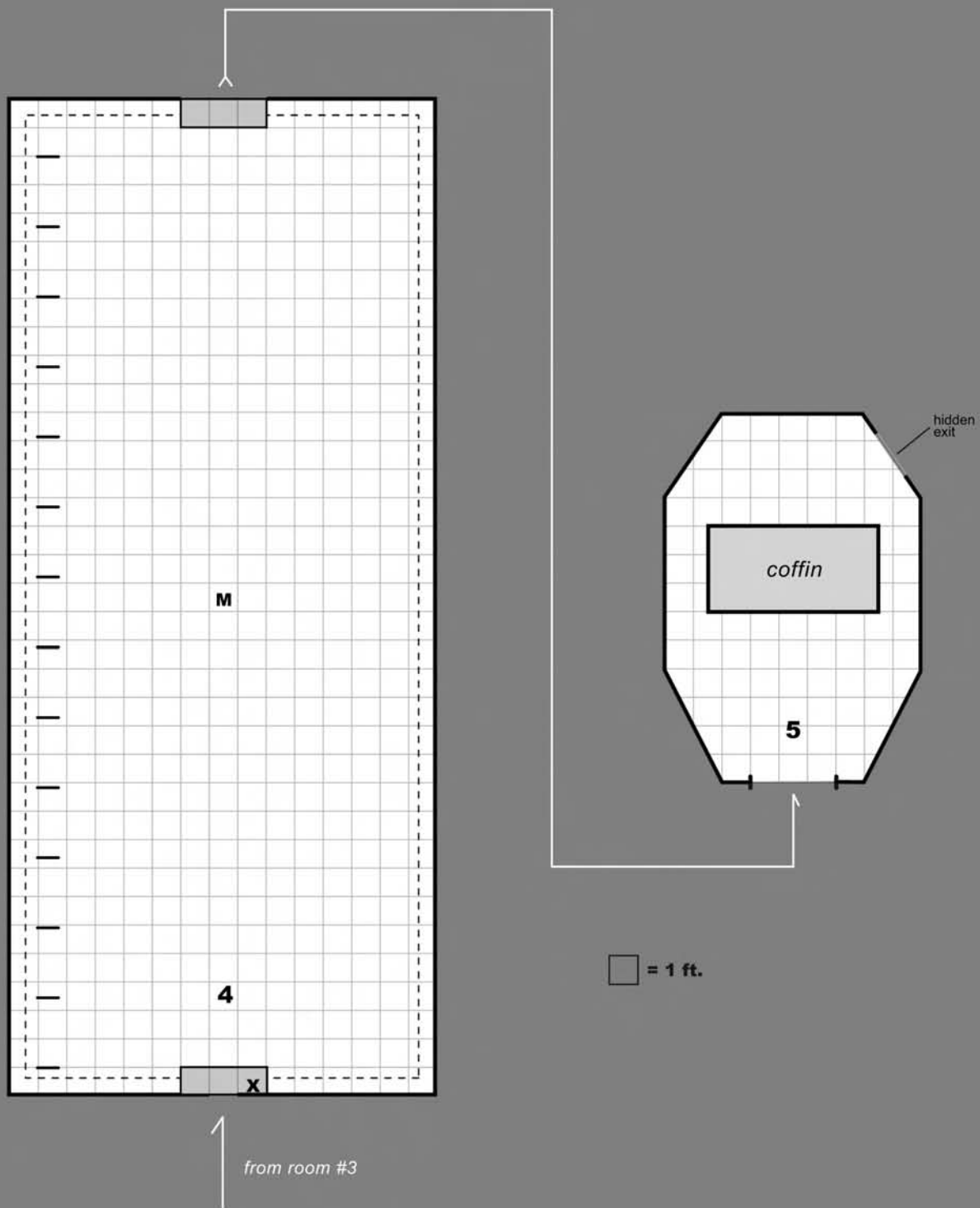
The final room is a small octagonal alcove that contains Fortune’s crypt. The top of the crypt is covered in a series of bas-relief carvings that reproduce scenes from Fortune’s life. In all but one of the depictions Fortune’s left profile is featured. The single depiction of his right profile shows him wearing an elaborate earring. A successful DC 25 Search check will allow the players to find a trigger in that carving that will open the cover of the crypt as well as a door in one of the walls. The door leads to a tunnel, over a mile in length, that opens into a shallow cave in a distant hill. The players find Fortune’s remains, still dressed in moldering finery, within the crypt. The remains include the following items: a gold ring with an aquamarine stone (500 gp); a golden yellow topaz cuff-style bracelet with four stones (2000 gp); two pearl cuff links and six matching clothing buttons (800 gp total); and a silver coil earring with a lapis in the center (150 gp).

A DC 12 Listen check when removing the coffin lid will indicate a light jingling sound from within the lid. Further, a successful DC 25 Spot check will reveal a false front to the bottom of the coffin lid. Inside, the players will find 3,000 gp.

Players' Handout A

The carving on the wall is a slide puzzle which the players must solve. The gridded version below represents the tiles. Photocopy, clip out, and remove the upper right tile. Then jumble up the tiles. You can use a checkerboard or other gridded surface to simulate the constraints of the sliding motion. The solution is shown at the bottom.





Dungeon Crawl Classics

The Snare of the Shadow Sylphs

By Jessica Van Oort

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

The Snare of the Shadow Sylphs is designed for four to six player characters of 4th-6th level. A total of 18-25 character levels is recommended. See the "Scaling Information" section for advice on how to adapt this adventure for parties of higher or lower levels. Any mixture of classes could successfully complete this adventure: fighters will be useful in the combats, rogues are invaluable in dealing with the traps, and casters with high Will saves are especially well-suited to seeing through the many illusions.

Adventure Summary

When a party of adventurers disturbs the queen of the shadow sylphs at her hunt, she is angered and traps them within a shifting maze of dark brambles and illusions. The party must battle foes both illusory and real, solve a cryptic moon phase puzzle, and survive deadly and confusing traps in order to escape the maze. The queen, however, will not let the party leave her domain so easily. She is a powerful sorceress with mind-influencing magic, and the adventurers must discover how to destroy the queen's crown, the source of her power, in order to defeat her and escape her snare.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the

encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|-----|------|---|----|
| 1-1A | 156 | T | Closing walls trap | 6 |
| 1-2 | 157 | C | Pool of conjuration Bat swarm | 2 |
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| 1-4 | 158 | P, T | Moon phase puzzle <i>Shocking grasp</i> trap | 3 |
| 1-4A | 159 | T, C | <i>Mass reduce person</i> trap 2 Shadow sylph knights | 7 |
| 1-5 | 159 | T, C | <i>Seeming</i> trap Shadow sylph knight | 7 |
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| 1-7 | 160 | P | Queen's altar | |
| 1-8 | 161 | C | <i>Queen of the Night</i> Wood, shadow sylph Sor8 Shadow sylph knight | 12 |

Scaling Information

The Snare of the Shadow Sylphs is designed for 4-6 characters of 4th-6th levels, but can easily be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure with any of the following suggestions:

Weaker parties (fewer than 4 characters, or below 4th level): Have one of the shadow sylph knights in area 1-4A be already wounded by the stag and at half normal hit points. Replace the shadow mastiff in area 1-6 with a fiendish dire bat. Make the queen in area 1-8 a 6th level sorceress instead of an 8th level sorceress.

Stronger parties (more than 6 characters, or above 6th level): Add another bat swarm in area 1-3 and an additional shadow sylph knight in both areas 1-4A and 1-8. Either give the shadow mastiff in area 1-6 an additional 2 HD or add a second shadow mastiff.

Getting the Players Involved

This adventure begins when the shadow sylph hunt passes the PCs' camp. The characters do not need to take any particular action in order to become trapped in the maze. Because of this, it is very easy to involve the players in this adventure. They could be traveling through the forest to any destination. They could also be searching for some treasure or adventure to be found within the forest, or they could have heard of the moon stag and be hunting it themselves.

Dealing with Illusions

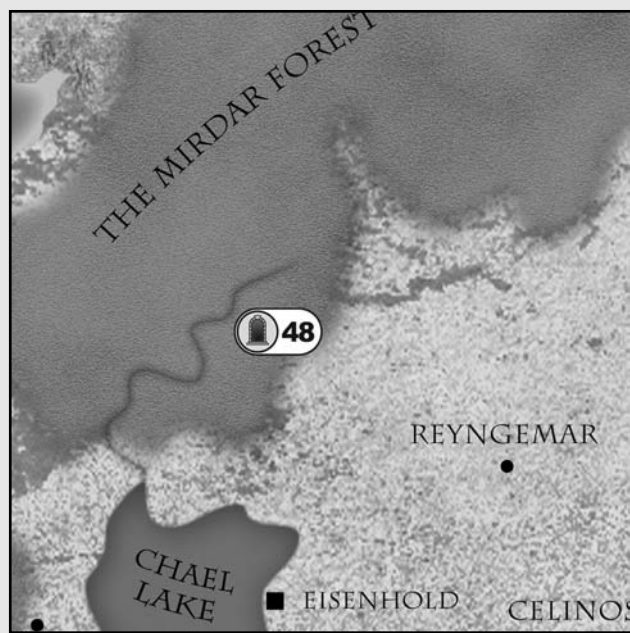
The shadow sylphs cast various illusion spells, which appear real until interacted with. When a character touches, attacks, or examines an illusion closely, that character is entitled to a Will save to disbelieve the illusion. The GM may want to make this roll secretly so that a player whose character fails the save is not aware that something is amiss. A character who successfully disbelieves a *minor image* still sees a vague outline of the image, but knows it is not really there. A character who disbelieves a *shadow conjuration* takes less damage from it, but since a *shadow conjuration* is partially real, disbelief does not entirely protect a character against its effects.

Background Story

The domain of the shadow sylphs is found in the darkest, wildest regions of the Mirdar Forest (or any forest you'd like to substitute from your campaign). Territorial and capricious, these evil fey hate intruders. A powerful shadow sylph sorceress is the ruler of this darkened domain, and she has created a maze of shadow and illusions to trap unwary travelers who stumble into her forest. Few, if any, have ever found their way back out of this maze into the sunlit world.

DCC World

Legends tell of a kingdom of shadow fae hidden deep within the darkest, wildest regions of the Mirdar Forest. Many a foolish would-be explorer and treasure seeker has been lost amongst the woodland tangle, never to be seen again, save for the occasional bleached skull hanging from a thorny vine.



The shadow sylph sorceress calls herself the Queen of the Night Wood, and gains great power through blood sacrifices performed at the dark of the moon. The hapless wanderers held in the queen's maze often serve as the sacrificial victims, feeding the very power that traps them there. There is a trade-off for the queen's power, however; since she derives her magic from the dark of the moon, the full moon weakens her.

A stag with a globe of moonlight between its antlers has recently been seen within the borders of the queen's land. Knowing that this stag could penetrate her illusions and potentially destroy her, the queen has gathered her knights and ridden out to hunt the stag and kill it before it can harm her. However, her hunt is interrupted as she comes across a camp of unwelcome adventurers.

Player Beginning

Once the party has camped for the night, read or paraphrase the following:

In the distance, you hear the sound of horses' hooves and the peal of hunting horns. A stag leaps from the underbrush and pauses for a moment, looking at you. It is no ordinary stag: in the darkness it appears to be glowing with moonlight, and a radiant sphere that resembles the full moon rests between its antlers. The horns sound again, closer this time, and the stag bolts through your camp and off into the forest. Hard on its heels comes a hunting party, a dozen shadowy figures with spears, bows, and dark banners, mounted on black horses. Although shaped like thin, willowy humans, they have pale gray skin and an otherworldly quality about them; they are wreathed in shadow and seem as if they might vanish from sight in the blink of an eye.

At the head of the hunting party rides a queen of unearthly beauty. Her crown seems to eat the light, and dark mist roils out of it, shaping itself like a cloak around her. She holds up her hand, and her knights come to a halt behind her. She turns her head and regards you with cold black eyes. "Mortal intruders," she says, "I am the Queen of the Night Wood. You may not look upon me and walk free." Before you have a chance to respond, she raises her hand to her crown, and darkness streams out to engulf you. Everything goes black and the world shifts beneath your feet as you are pulled into some strange new place.

Level 1: The Maze

The Bramble Maze

The maze is created of dark brambles that arch overhead, forming a solid roof that blocks out all natural light. Since the brambles are magical, spells that target plants will not affect them. They are immune to fire damage and regenerate other damage at a rate of 5 points per round. The thorny roots of the bramble wall extend underground, so tunneling does not help the characters escape. The wall can be breached by strength or sufficient damage – though the thorns pierce those who come into contact with them – but any characters who successfully make it through the brambles do not reach the outside world, instead appearing in a random spot along the wall of the area they were trying to leave. Similarly, teleportation magic does not help a character escape.

All the large areas of the bramble maze are perfect hemispheres, sixty feet in diameter and thirty feet at the highest point of the domed ceiling. The ground is packed earth with no vegetation.

The passages in the bramble maze are 10 feet wide, have ceilings 10 feet high, and curve between the large circular areas.

Bramble Wall: 5 ft. thick; hardness 5; regeneration 5; hp 300; Climb DC 15. A creature attempting to force its way through the brambles must make a DC 25 strength check to move 5 feet. However, moving through or being slammed into the wall causes a creature to take 1d6 piercing damage per round of contact.

Simple Wooden Door: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; break DC 13.

The bramble maze is a demiplane and has the following planar traits. All other aspects are normal.

Self-contained shape: The bramble maze is a series of circles connected by curving pathways. If a creature exits through the brambles on one side of a circle or pathway, it reappears on the other side.

Mildly evil-aligned: Good creatures take a -2 circumstance penalty on all Charisma-based checks.

Limited magic: Teleportation spells, powers and effects function within the bramble maze but will not transport a creature outside the maze.

Enhanced magic: Spells and spell-like abilities from the Illusion school are heightened by two spell levels, as if with the feat Heighten Spell, but without actually using up a higher level spell slot. Therefore, the saving throw DCs of all illusion spells are two higher than normal.

When the characters first appear in the bramble maze, certain knowledge skills may help them determine where they are. A DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that the thorns are not plants and cannot be affected by ordinary means. A DC 18 Knowledge (arcana) check will determine that the entire place has been created by magic, that the way out is probably also through magic, and that magic of the Illusion school seems particularly prevalent. A DC 18 Knowledge (the planes) check indicates that this is a demiplane of some kind and that the way to leave it is most likely through finding a portal, a key, or a guardian who has to be defeated. A DC 15 bardic knowledge check allows a character to remember a song about a handsome knight who was trapped in just such a bramble maze by a powerful sorceress, and was only released after promising to serve her faithfully.

The Shifting Maze

As the characters wander the bramble maze, there is a chance that the illusion magic of the maze will cause it to shift. Each time the party enters one of the large circular areas, roll a d4. On a roll of 1, the maze shifts and the contents of the current area are suddenly switched with the contents of another area in the maze.

When the maze shifts, switch all characters, creatures, objects lying on the ground, and freestanding features such as pillars, pools, and so on from one area to the other. Do not switch the walls, doors, or *illusory doors*.

If the characters have not yet solved the moon phase puzzle in area 1-4, switch the area they are currently in with either area 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, or 1-4. Determine the location into which they are switched by rolling a d4.

If the characters have solved the moon phase puzzle in area 1-4, causing the magic doors to appear, switch the area they are currently in with either area 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, or 1-6. Determine the location into which they are switched by rolling a d6.

Because all the circular areas in the bramble maze are identical in shape and size, the characters do not experience the shifting as motion from one place to another, but instead as the appearance or disappearance of doors. When this happens, give the players a description similar to the following:

As the door swings shut behind you, the shadows lurking in the thorny walls twist and writhe, and suddenly the door you just stepped through vanishes, replaced by solid brambles. The door you thought you saw directly to your left vanishes as well. A single wooden door appears directly across the room from you.

As the maze alters, the characters may have to retrace their steps and pass through areas they have already explored. Creatures they have defeated do not reap-

pear, but creatures they failed to defeat attack them again, and traps they did not spring or that automatically reset are still active.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Room with No Doors: Once a character has provided a light source, read or paraphrase the following:

You find yourselves within a circular space, hedged in on all sides by walls of dark brambles that seem to absorb the light. The brambles have sharp, wicked-looking thorns and they arch overhead, trapping you inside what looks like an upside-down bowl. You see no exits, nothing to mark direction. On one wall, however, a corpse hangs impaled on the thorns; from its state of decay you guess it to be several weeks old.

When the characters first appear in this area, transported by the queen's magic, have each character make a Reflex save at DC 15. Success means that they have landed on their feet. Failure means they fall against a bramble wall and are impaled by thorns for 1d6 damage.

This empty room has no visible exits. The characters may try various methods of escape, but due to the magic of the maze, none will be successful. There are, however, two *illusory doors* that lead out of this area, one to the east and one to the west. The *illusory doors* cannot be seen visibly, but anyone methodically searching the walls will detect them by touch and easily pass through.

Treasure: The corpse impaled on the brambles is that of a female human, a wandering cleric who stumbled into the shadow sylphs' domain. She obviously never made it out of this area. On her corpse can be found 19 gp, 35 sp, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and a *scroll of remove curse*.

Area 1-1A – Compacting Corridor (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

A low-ceilinged corridor of the same dark brambles curves off to your left. Once you have taken a few steps, you can see that the corridor ends in a closed wooden door, guarded by a large ogre wielding a club the size of a sapling. The ogre roars, brandishes its club, and looks ready to attack anyone who approaches.

Development: The ogre is a *minor image* cast by the shadow sylphs. It stands in front of the door into area 1-2 and will not move from its spot. Any characters interacting with it may make a Will save at DC 15 to recognize it as illusory. When struck, it disappears.

At the halfway point of this curving corridor is a closing walls trap. If it is triggered, the brambles begin to creak ominously and close in. The PCs have 3 rounds to get out of the shrinking corridor before they are impaled on the thorns.

Closing walls trap: CR 6; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; walls move together (10d6, piercing thorns); multiple targets (all creatures in corridor); never miss; onset delay (3 rounds); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 22.

Area 1-2 – Pool of Conjuration (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the center of this room you see a round pool of shallow water. It seems to glow with a pale, deathly light that does not illuminate anything surrounding it. The bramble wall to your right stirs suddenly and the stag you saw before in the forest, with the sphere of moonlight between its antlers, comes bounding through the magical thorn barrier as if it did not exist. An arrow sticks from its side, and blood drips from the wound. Hurrying as though pursued, the stag crosses the room, leaps over the pool, and slips out through the opposite wall.

This area is identical in size and shape to area 1-1. However, there are two visible exits, an opening in the bramble wall to the west, and a door to the south.

The moon stag is able to pass through the illusion magic of the maze without difficulty due to its innate powers. The PCs are not able to follow it, and even if they search the area of the wall that the stag leaped through they cannot discover a way out.

The pool in this room allows the shadow sylph queen to keep an eye on the victims of her maze. She can both see and cast spells through the pool, targeting anyone within 10 feet. See the queen's statistics listed under area 1-8 for the spells she has available. The pool itself is five feet in diameter, one foot deep, and is made of stone. If the water is drained from the pool through magical or ordinary means, it will cease to function.

Development: If a character looks into the pool, read or paraphrase the following:

You see a face looking back out at you, and it is not your own reflection. Cold eyes glitter beneath a dark crown; it is the queen of the hunt who sent you into this place. Her lips move, though you hear no sound, and the water of the pool stirs and ripples, distorting her image.



As the characters interact with the queen and the other shadow sylphs, allow them to make knowledge checks to gain information about these opponents. A successful DC 13 Knowledge (nature) check indicates that these creatures are some sort of fey and are vulnerable to cold iron weapons, and if the check exceeds DC 18 the character also knows that these particular fey have the ability to transport themselves via shadows. A bardic knowledge check (DC 20) will let a character remember tales of an evil race of fey who lure travelers into traps through their illusions and are most powerful in darkness and shadow.

Tactics: The queen casts *magic missile* at anyone who looks into the pool, and unless the PCs move out of range, she summons a bat swarm to attack them. Her goal at this point is to harry the PCs, not to kill them.

Bat Swarm: CR 2; Diminutive animal (swarm); HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +2; Spd. 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk (1d6, swarm); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA distraction, wounding; SQ blindsense 20 ft., half damage from slashing and piercing, low-light vision, swarm traits; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Listen +11, Spot +11; Alertness, Lightning Reflexes.

Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Wounding (Ex): Any living creature damaged by a bat swarm continues to bleed, losing 1 hit point per round thereafter. The bleeding can be stopped by a DC 10 heal check or healing magic.

Area 1-3 – Bat Nest (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

As you enter this area, you hear a soft rustling sound above you. Looking up, you see hundreds of bats hanging upside down in the shadows of the thorny ceiling. Disturbed by your presence, they drop from their perches and rush toward you in a great mass, with a flurry of flapping wings.

This area is home to a swarm of bats. The exits are a closed door to the east, and an open corridor to the south.

Tactics: The bat swarm, disturbed by the PCs' entrance, sweeps around the room and attacks anyone who is not holding a source of fire. The bats fear fire and keep away from it. In the second round of combat, a fiendish dire bat appears and joins the fight, harrying an unsuspecting PC from behind unless that character makes a Listen check versus the fiendish dire bat's Move Silently check. The fiendish dire bat, however, is actually a shadow conjuration and only partially real.

Bat Swarm: See statistics listed under area 1-2.

Fiendish Dire Bat (shadow conjuration): CR 3; Large magical beast (extraplanar); HD 4d8+12; hp 6; Init +6; Spd. 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA smite good; SQ blindsense 40 ft., darkvision 60 ft., damage reduction 5/magic, resistance to fire and cold 5, spell resistance 9; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +4, Listen +12, Spot +8, Move Silently +11; Alertness, Stealthy.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the fiendish dire bat can make a normal melee attack to deal +4 additional damage against a good foe.

Shadow Conjuration: This fiendish dire bat is a *shadow conjuration*. It has one-fifth the hit points of a real fiendish dire bat. Anyone interacting with it makes a Will save at DC 19 to recognize it as illusory. Against those who fail this save, the fiendish dire bat does normal damage and has all the normal special abilities and qualities listed above. Against those who succeed at the save, however, it does one-fifth normal damage, has armor class 12, and has only a 20% chance of its special abilities working.

Area 1-4 – The Moon Phase Pillar (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A stone pillar about six feet tall stands at the center of this room, which does not have any exits except for the one through which you entered. The pillar has eight flat sides and is covered in runes. Across the room from you, two long-dead skeletons lie huddled together, covered in tattered remnants of rotting leather armor.

Give out player Handout A when the PCs enter this area. There is an *illusory door* to the south, through which the PCs will most likely have entered. Three other doors, to the north, east, and west, appear once the puzzle of the moon phase pillar is successfully solved.

Development: When a character examines the pillar more closely, read or paraphrase the following:

On each of the eight sides of the pillar, at about shoulder height to a human, one of the phases of the moon is carved. As you walk around the pillar you see the waxing crescent, first quarter, waxing gibbous, full moon, waning gibbous, last quarter, waning crescent, and new moon. Above the moon phase carvings is a line of text that circles the entire pillar, written in Common. It reads, "Do honor to the Queen of the Night Wood, or remain forever within her snare."

Beneath the moon phase carvings are lines of runes in some unknown language. There are runes on all eight sides, but the greatest number are on the side with the new moon carving, and the least number of runes are on the full moon side.

A DC 20 Decipher Script or Knowledge (arcana) check gives more information about the runes: they describe the ritual activities the shadow sylphs perform at the different phases of the moon. The most notable of these are special prayers to be said at the first and last quarters, and blood sacrifices to the queen that are made at the new moon. There seems to be little ritual activity that takes place at the full moon.

The *shocking grasp* trap attacks anyone who touches the carved moon phases (except for the new moon). The trap automatically resets and repeats its attack for each wrong answer. Touching the new moon is the correct answer and causes a tiny needle to appear at the center of the new moon carving. A character must prick his or her finger on the needle and shed a drop of blood on the new moon carving in order to solve the puzzle and cause the

three doors to appear. However, the character who gives blood in this way becomes sickened (-2 to attack rolls, weapon damage, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks) for 1d10 minutes.

Treasure: The skeletons lying near the north door have been dead so long that their features cannot be identified. They are small sized, so they may have been a pair of halfling adventurers. 45 gp, 18 sp, and a +1 *buckler* can be found on their bodies.

Shocking grasp trap: CR 3; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +2 melee touch; spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 3rd-level wizard, 3d6 electricity); Search DC 26; Disable Device 26.

Area 1-4A – The Dead Stag (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

For the third time today you catch sight of the moon stag, but now it is dead, lying in the corridor with three arrows piercing it, one through its heart. The moon between its antlers, however, still glows as brightly as ever. Two shadowy, gray-skinned figures are kneeling beside the dead stag with knives at the ready.

Development: There is a *mass reduce person* trap set on the first square a character moves into when entering from area 1-4. Unless the trap is disarmed, everyone within a 15 foot radius of the trapped square must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) or shrink. Any PCs affected get +2 Dexterity, -2 Strength, +1 on attack rolls and +1 to AC due to their smaller size category. Equipment also shrinks, which reduces the damage done by weapons (usually one die size). While a hindrance to fighters, this size change may actually be an asset to rogues or spellcasters.

Tactics: The two shadow sylph knights have been ordered to bring back the moon stag's corpse and therefore they fight to the death to keep the PCs from claiming it. They make good use of their *shadow walk* ability to snipe at the characters with their bows, and use *lesser confusion* on the characters who look most susceptible. If the battle seems to be going against them, one of them calls the trained shadow mastiff from area 1-6 in to join the fight.

Once the shadow sylphs are defeated, the party can examine the dead stag. The moon sphere has both a magic aura (moderate evocation) and a good aura (moderate strength). To the character who first touches the dead stag, read or paraphrase the following:

As you touch the dead creature, for a moment your mind seems to merge with the stag's memories and you feel yourself bounding wild

and free through dark forests. Wherever your hooves step the shadows are not as dark and evil creatures flee before you. Then the vision ends and you are yourself again, holding the glowing sphere of moonlight in both hands. The stag's corpse dissolves into light and vanishes, but the moon sphere remains.

Mass reduce person trap: CR 5; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); no reset; spell effect (*mass reduce person*, 7th-level wizard, 9 min. duration, DC 16 Fortitude save negates); multiple targets (up to 7 targets within a 15-ft. radius); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29.

Shadow Sylph Knights (2): CR 3; Medium fey; HD 5d6+5; hp 22; Init +2; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/19-20, short sword) or +5 ranged (1d8/x3, longbow); SA spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., shadow walk; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Ride +10, Spot +9, Survival +9; Stealthy, Weapon Focus (longbow).

Shadow walk (Su): As a move action, a shadow sylph may transport itself up to 30 ft. as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. This movement must begin and end in shadowy areas, and does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): 1/day – *blur*, 1/day – *minor image* (DC 15), 3/day – *lesser confusion* (DC 12); Caster level 4th. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, longbow, 20 arrows, hunting knife, 5 gp, 26 sp.

Area 1-5 – Mirror Trap (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the center of this area, three mirrors stand back to back, facing outward. The mirrors are set in iron stands and are tall enough for you to see your full reflection in them.

This area has two doors, one to the south and one to the west.

Development: Two of the mirrors are ordinary, but the third is trapped. Whoever looks in the mirror and is seen by the mirror's *arcane eye* must make a DC 17 Will save or be subject to a *seeming* spell that makes its target look just like a shadow sylph: thin and willowy with gray skin, completely black eyes, and a continual shroud of darkness. If this trap is triggered, a real shadow sylph knight also appears, making it difficult to tell the transformed PC from the enemy.



Tactics: The shadow sylph knight does not immediately attack, but instead attempts to confuse the party by mimicking whichever character has been affected by the *seeming*. If no character is altered, the shadow sylph creates a *minor image* that looks just like itself in order to confuse the PCs. The shadow sylph fights until it is wounded and then tries to escape. The shadow sylphs' *shadow walk* ability, unlike ordinary teleportation magic, functions within the maze, permitting the sylphs to come and go as they please.

Treasure: A Search check (DC 18) finds a *ring of protection* +1 on the ground behind one of the mirrors, as if dropped there by some previous victim of the trap.

Seeming trap: CR 6; magic device; visual trigger (*arcane eye*); no reset; spell effect (*seeming*, 9th-level wizard, 12-hour duration, DC 17 Will save); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Shadow Sylph Knight: See statistics listed under area 1-4A.

Area 1-6 – Shadow Mastiff's Lair (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

At first this room seems to be completely empty and featureless. As you peer into the darkness, however, you see a lump of something lying on

the ground. It looks like a human leg that has been gnawed on. You smell the mingled scents of blood and animal dung.

This area is home to a shadow mastiff, which attacks the party from its concealment in the darkness. It has been trained as a guard dog for the shadow sylphs and fights to the death. There are two exits to this area, a gap in the brambles to the south and a door to the east.

Tactics: The shadow mastiff begins the combat with the advantage of concealment, due to its *shadow blend* ability. If any PC succeeds at a Spot check at DC 28 to notice it, the shadow mastiff uses its *bay* ability to incapacitate as many characters as possible and then attacks. If the shadow mastiff goes unnoticed, it sneaks up on the weakest-looking character and attacks suddenly.

Shadow Mastiff: CR 5; Medium outsider (extraplanar); HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +5; Spd. 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, bite); SA bay, trip; SQ darkvision 60 ft., shadow blend, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Spot +8, Survival +8; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Track.

Bay (Su): When a shadow mastiff howls or barks, all creatures except evil outsiders within a 300-foot spread must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting fear effect. Whether or not the save is successful, an affected creature is immune to the same mastiff's bay for 24 hours.

Shadow Blend (Su): In any condition of illumination other than full daylight, a shadow mastiff can disappear into the shadows, giving it total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability. A *daylight* spell, however, will.

Area 1-7 – The Altar: Read or paraphrase the following:

The curving corridor opens out into an area unlike any you have yet seen in this maze. You are in a semi-circular chamber approximate thirty feet wide. Directly across from you, against the thorny wall, is a large stone altar. The centerpiece of the altar is a life-sized statue of a woman. You recognize the figure as the Queen of the Night Wood; she holds a stone copy of her crown between her hands and seems to be looking down into it. When you follow the statue's gaze, you notice that the interior of the stone crown is crusted with a thick layer of dried

blood. Carved along the edge of the altar are the following words: "When silver light is darkened, blood calls out and wakens power. Sacrifice to the Queen of the Wood and the Night, for she will bless her faithful servants."

Give out player Handout B when the PCs enter this area. There are no visible doors, although one will appear when the altar puzzle has been successfully solved. The altar has an evil aura (moderate strength) visible to anyone who casts *detect evil*.

Development: There are two ways to solve the puzzle of the altar. Blood poured into the crown causes the door to appear. However, unlike the moon phase puzzle, one drop of blood is not enough; a character must drain enough blood to deal 1 point of Constitution damage. Also, if blood is poured into the crown, everyone within 10 feet feels a surge of evil power, causing good aligned characters to suffer a -2 penalty to all attacks and saving throws for 2d6 minutes. Neutral characters suffer a -1 penalty, and evil characters are unaffected.

A better option for solving this puzzle is to place the full moon sphere inside the stone crown. The holy power of the full moon sphere instantly shatters the crown and the statue of the queen cracks down the center, as does the entire altar. The full moon sphere, however, is undamaged and can be recovered for further use.

In either case, an open archway twenty feet wide appears behind the altar once the puzzle has been solved.

Area 1-8 – The Queen’s Chamber (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

This circular chamber, unlike all the others, is furnished and occupied. Hangings of velvet and silk cover the thorny walls, and the room is dimly lit with floating glass globes that seem to contain living fireflies. The Queen of the Night Wood lounges on a carved ebony divan beside a low table that holds a silver bowl, into which the queen is currently gazing. A gray-skinned knight armed with sword and bow stands guard beside her, and her shadowy crown rests on a stand across the room.

The queen looks up as you enter, surprise registering on her face. "I wasn't expecting you so soon," she says. "In fact, I wasn't expecting you at all. I'm rather impressed by your resourcefulness. Perhaps I won't kill all of you. I could keep one as a servant. But which one?"

The queen has been waiting in this chamber for a report from the knights she sent to collect the moon

stag’s corpse. She has been amusing herself by watching the PCs through her conjuring pool. She is a formidable opponent, with powerful offensive spells that could kill one or more members of a party of this level.

The PCs, however, have a potent weapon in the full moon sphere, which they can use against the queen in several ways. If they succeed in touching her with it she takes 6d6 damage. An even better use for the sphere is placing it within the queen’s crown, as suggested by the experience with the altar. The full moon sphere shatters the crown upon touching it, and whether the queen is currently wearing the crown or not she immediately takes four negative levels, giving her the following penalties: -20 hit points, -4 on skill and ability checks, -4 to attack rolls and saving throws, -4 to effective caster level, -4 highest remaining spell slots.

Tactics: The queen has already used two 1st level, one 2nd level, and one 4th level spells. She cast *mage armor* on herself when she went out hunting the moon stag. If it is not still in effect, she re-casts it at the earliest opportunity. She is surprised and somewhat impressed that the PCs have made it this far, so she decides to keep one of the PCs as a useful servant and destroy the others. If anyone sacrificed blood on her altar she selects that character, who is at a -4 to all Will saves against her enchantment spells; otherwise, she chooses the most attractive male character and use *suggestion* to try to win him over to her side. The queen’s other driving motive is to keep the full moon sphere away from herself and her crown at all costs. She will use *suggestion*, and if that fails, her most damaging spells on whoever is holding the moon sphere, as well as ordering her knight to attack that person.

Treasure: The silver bowl the queen has been using for scrying is worth 400 gp, and a small locked chest (DC 28 Open Lock) holds 1,400 gp.

Full Moon Sphere

This glowing sphere is six inches in diameter and made of crystal. It glows with a silver light that illuminates a 20-foot radius. Three times per day, whoever holds the full moon sphere can create a focused beam of moonlight that is particularly damaging to undead creatures. This light appears as moonlight rather than sunlight, but is otherwise identical to the spell *searing light* (as cast by a 6th-level caster).

Moderate evocation; CL 6th; craft wondrous item, *searing light*; hardness 1; hp 18; break DC 13; Price 9,000 gp.

Shadow Sylph Knight: See statistics listed under area 1-4A.

The Queen of the Night Wood, Shadow Sylph Sorcerer 8: CR 11; Medium fey; HD 5d6+8d4+13; hp 46; Init +2; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 12 (16 with mage armor), touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +6; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee (1d4+1/19-20, +1 *dagger*); SA spell-like abilities, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., shadow walk, damage reduction 5/cold iron; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Concentration +9, Hide +10, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Ride +10, Spellcraft +9, Spot +9, Survival +9; Weapon Finesse, Spell Focus (enchantment), Empower Spell, Combat Casting.

Shadow walk (Su): As a move action, a shadow sylph may transport itself up to 30 ft. as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. This movement must begin and end in shadowy areas, and does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): 1/day – *blur*, 1/day – *minor image* (DC 17), 3/day – *lesser confusion* (DC 14); Caster level 4th. The save DCs are Charisma based.

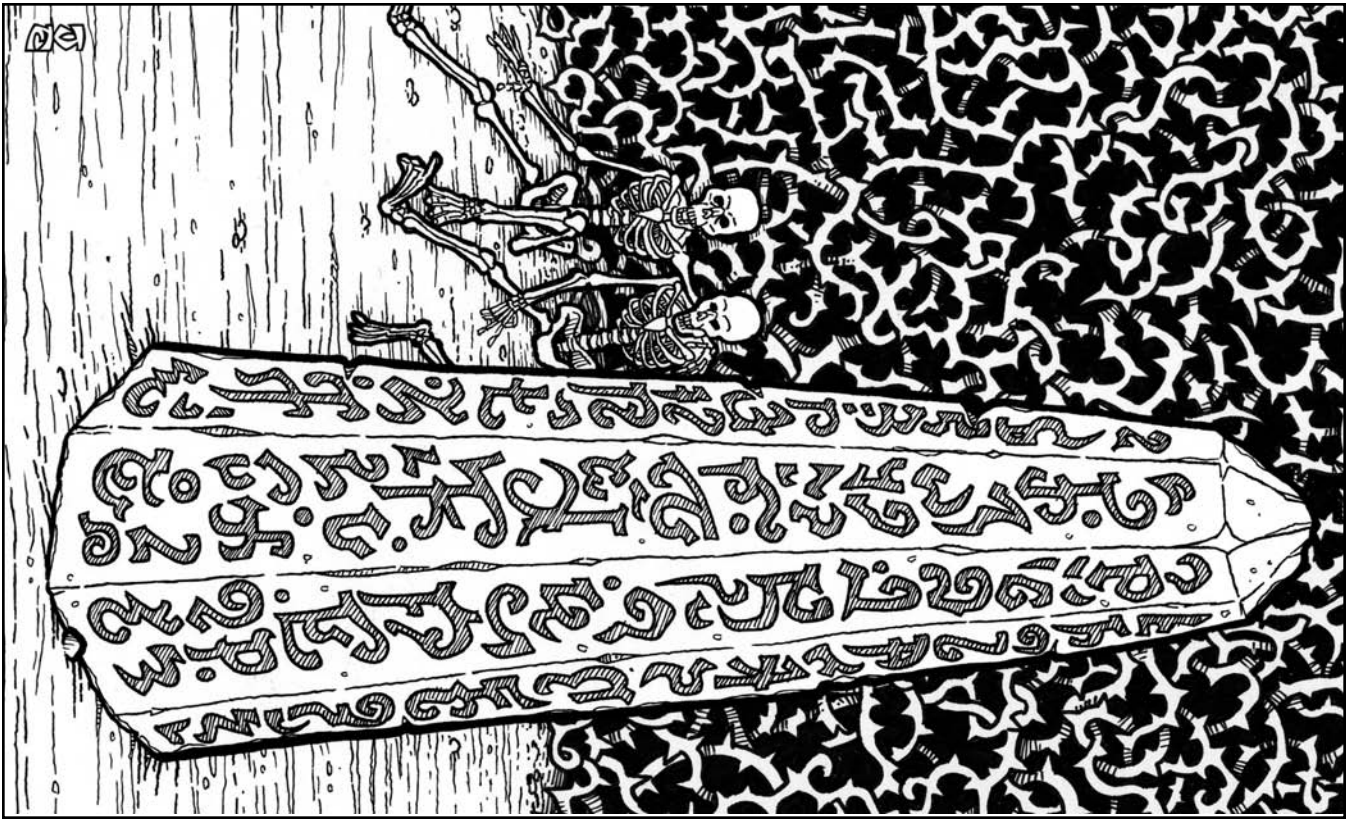
Spells (6/7/7/6/3*, save DC = 13 + spell's level):

0-level – *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue*; 1st-level – *charm person*, *protection from good*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *mount*; 2nd-level – *darkness*, *scorching ray*, *summon swarm*; 3rd-level – *lightning bolt*, *suggestion*; 4th-level – *shadow conjuration*. (*Because the queen has already used some spells earlier in the day, her remaining spell slots are 6/5/6/6/2.)

Possessions: Gold ring set with a black opal worth 1,250 gp, +1 *dagger*, *wand of daze monster* (18 charges), 50 gp, 32 sp.

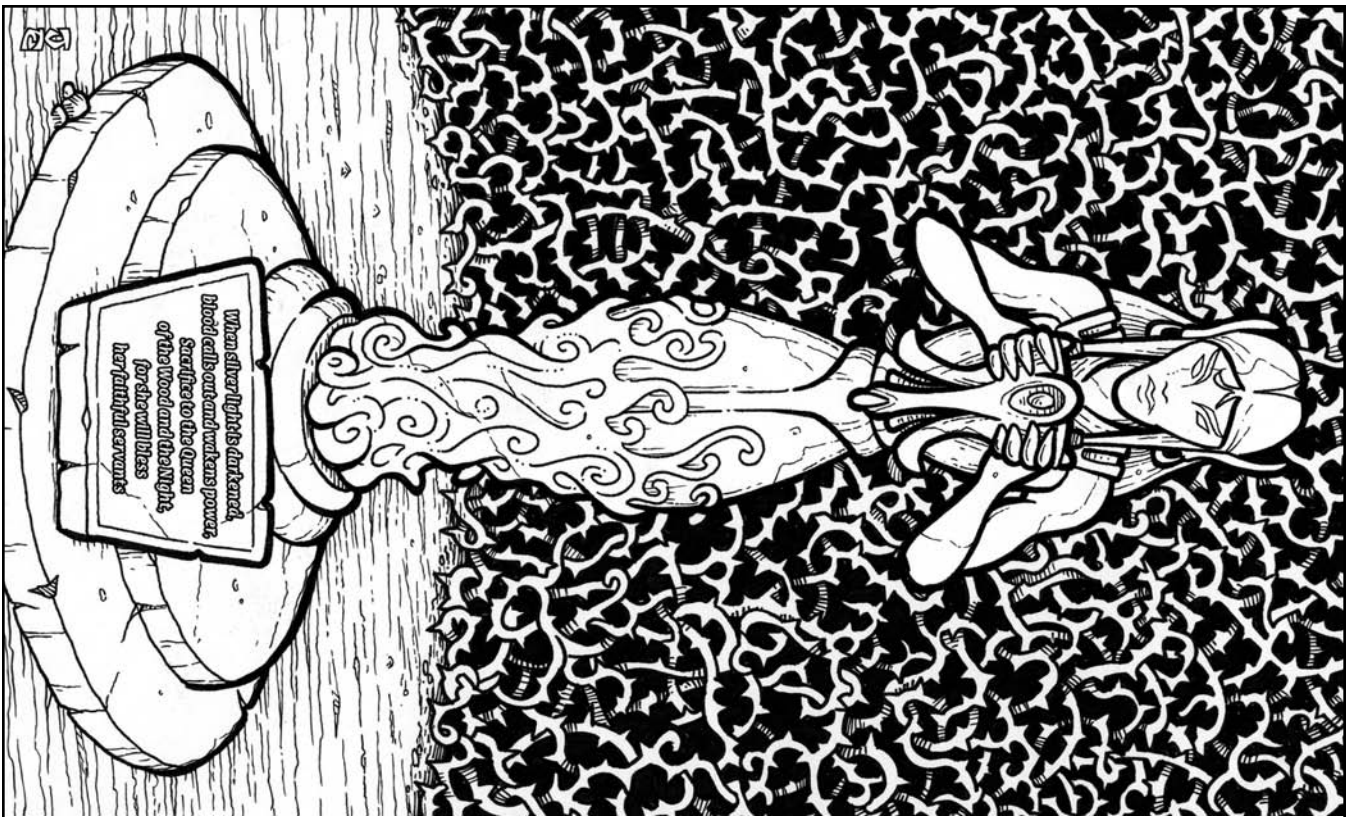
Wrapping Up

If the PCs did not destroy the queen's crown using the full moon sphere, the crown shatters at her death. The magic of the shadow maze also dies with the sorceress who created it. The brambles recede until they are nothing more than thorny forest undergrowth, difficult to push through, but not magical or damaging. What was once the queen's chamber is now open to a bright daylight sky. The PCs are less than a mile from the place where they made camp and they are free to continue on their way, though the remaining members of this shadow sylph tribe will now be their eternal enemies and may appear to trouble them another day.



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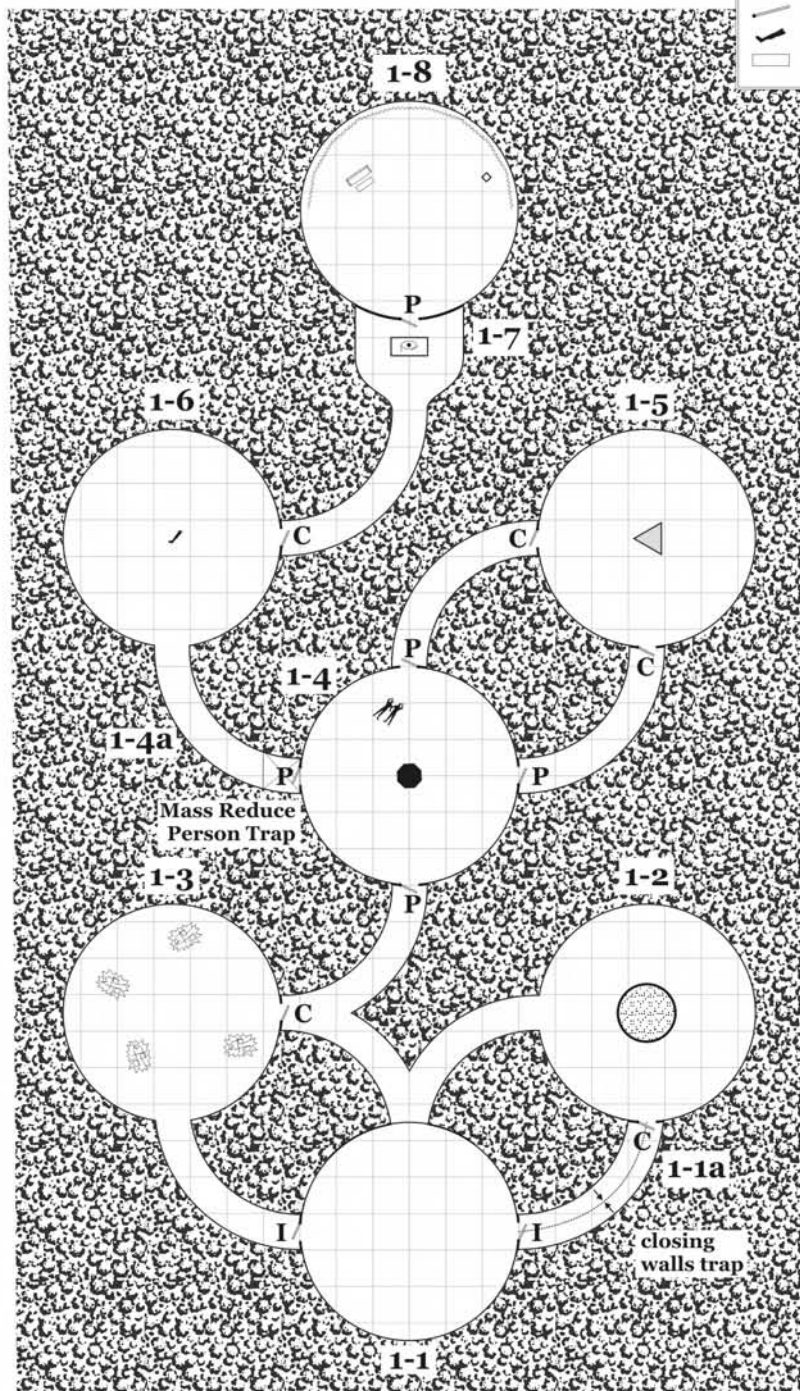


ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Snare of the Shadow Sylphs

1 square = 10 feet

| LEGEND | | | |
|--------|----------------|------------|----------|
| | Altar w/Statue | | Skeleton |
| | Curtains | | Stand |
| | Debris | | |
| | Divan | Door Types | |
| | Door | C | Closed |
| | Leg, Severed | I | Illusion |
| | Low Table | P | Puzzle |

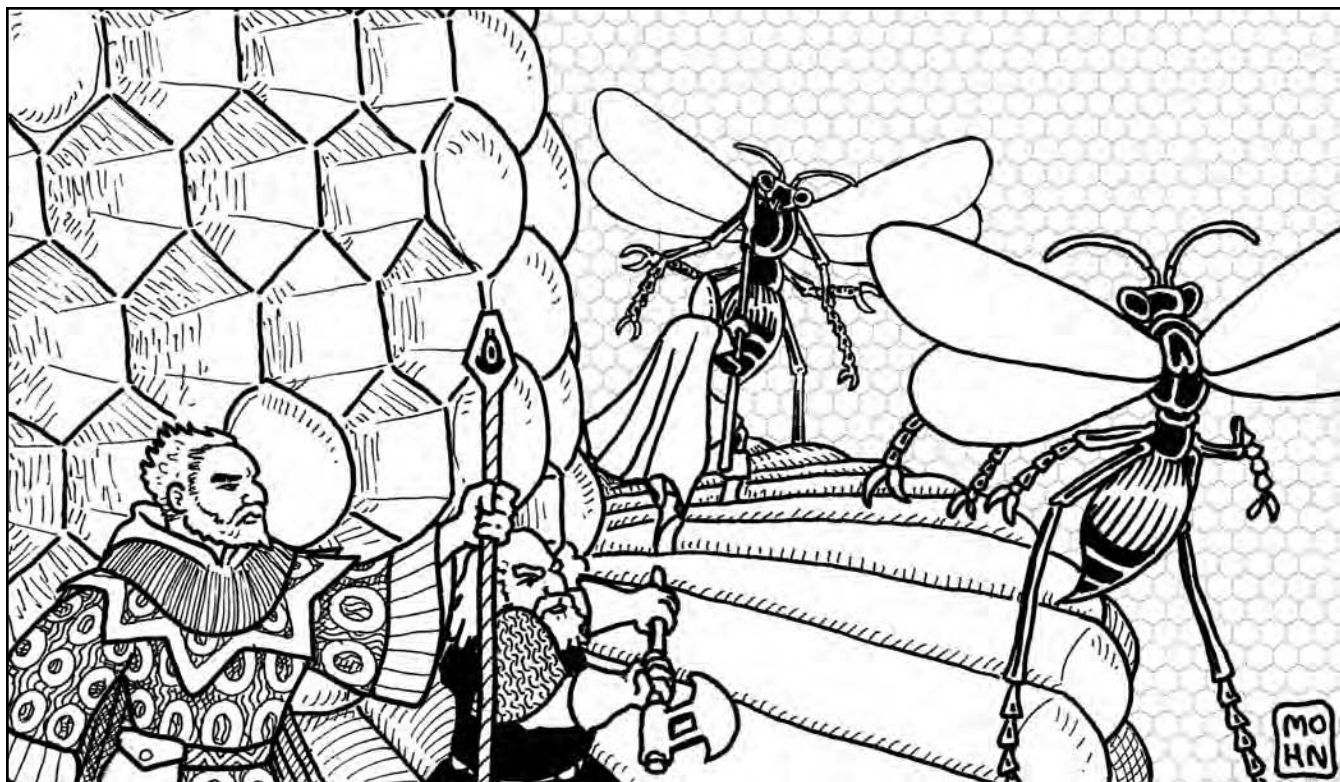


Dungeon Crawl Classics

Scourge of the Wasp Lord

By Justin Sipla, PhD

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Scourge of the Wasp Lord is designed for four to six adventurers of 4th through 6th level. Characters can be of any class, though it is preferable to have a well-rounded party with at least one healer capable of delaying or neutralizing poison. Rogues and spellcasters will be tested to the extreme in this adventure, and all characters will be required to negotiate challenging three-

dimensional spaces. Facility with climbing gear or flight capability is a must. Since many of the encounters are with vermin and plants, the skills of a druid and ranger are uniquely valuable. See the "Scaling Information" section for suggestions on how to tailor this adventure to your group's unique style of play.

Adventure Summary

Giant wasps are blighting the crossroads town of Abingwain, dismantling the frames of the dwellings and making off with the building materials. Locals report that domesticated animals and even townsfolk have been abducted by the vermin. Worst of all, the sacred *Sickle of Denithae* has been taken from the local temple. The PCs must investigate the wasp hive, recover the relic, and put an end to the infestation. They soon discover that the underground lair is occupied by an evil druid bent on the destruction of all civilization.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. **Loc** – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. **Pg** – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. **Type** – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). **Encounter** – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in italics are classed NPCs. **EL** – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|-----|-----|------|--|--------|
| 1-1 | 169 | C | Constrictor snake | 3 |
| 1-2 | 170 | C | Immobile assassin vine 7+ 6 worker wasps | |
| 1-3 | 171 | C | Centipede swarm | 4 |
| 1-4 | 172 | C | 3 soldier wasps | 5 |
| 2-1 | 172 | T/C | Collapsing floor trap 3 advanced blink dogs | 6 |
| 2-2 | 173 | C | 1 worker wasp | 1+ |
| 2-3 | 173 | C | 1 worker wasp | 1+ |
| 3-1 | 173 | C | 14 wasp larvae 2 worker wasps | 5+ |
| 3-3 | 174 | C | Advanced blink dog | 0 or 3 |
| 4-1 | 174 | C | 1-2 advanced blink dogs | varies |
| 4-3 | 175 | T/C | <i>Fire trap</i> Fatigued tendriculos | 6 |
| 4-4 | 175 | T/C | Collapsing floor trap | 2+ |
| 5-1 | 176 | C | Soldier wasps (variable number) | varies |
| 5-4 | 177 | C | Advanced blink dog | 0 or 3 |
| 5-5 | 177 | C | <i>Gwervanon</i> , venerable half-elf Drd 11 (queen wasp form) | 11 |

Scaling Information

Although designed for 4th-6th level PCs, this adventure can easily be adapted for weaker or stronger parties.

Weaker parties (fewer than 4 characters, or below 4th level): Reduce the number of soldier wasps encountered at any one time by 1. Reduce Gwervanon's druid levels by 2, and remove the tendriculos encountered in area 4-3.

Stronger parties (more than 6 characters, or above 6th level): Increase the number of soldier wasps at any one time by 1 and improve the HD of the blink dogs by 3 (increasing them to Large size). Add one immobile assassin vine to area 1-2.

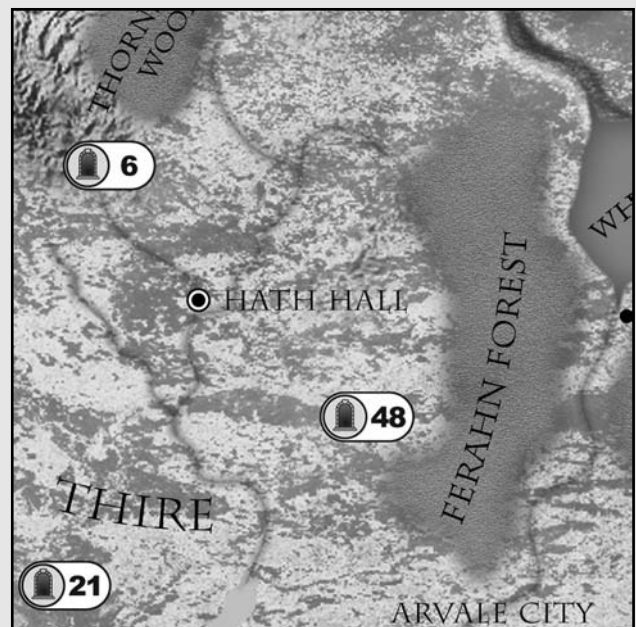
Getting the Players Involved

It is assumed that the PCs are located in Abingwain on the day of the attack. They could be locals answering the call to defend the village, or merely passers-by, taking their leave before heading to other destinations. Many of the town guardsmen were slain during the initial wasp attack, so it may be that the PCs are the only individuals capable or willing to confront the wasps in their lair. Whatever the case, the town council members have amassed a sum of 2,500 gp as payment to investigate and clear the giant wasp nest outside of town, and another 2,500 gp to recover the *Sickle of Denithae*, a holy relic missing from the goddess's ruined temple.

If the PCs are hesitant to get involved, consider provoking an encounter in Abingwain between their company and a flight of giant wasps. Emphasize the wanton destruction of the town's buildings, and the bold abduction of livestock and townsfolk. Apart from making an interesting encounter, this will put some perspective on

DCC World

The town of Abingwain was founded at a merchants' cross, where the dusty trails of the caravaneers traveling from east from Hath Hall cross the rutted tracks of the tinkers marching south from Longdale. Notable for its shrines to many nature deities, and for its fine hostelries, Abingwain is even reputed to be home to the relic known as the *Sickle of Denithae*.



the situation. If your PCs are good-natured, nothing catalyzes a dungeon crawl better than witnessing the help-
less slaughter of peasants. Evil PCs may be interested in seizing the *Sickle of Denithae* or other lost property for themselves.

Background Story

The druid Gwervanon once lived in simple devotion to nature, tending forests and rehabilitating sick animals. Originally from the misty Mosswood, the half-elf went abroad in his early adulthood to study nature's complexity and lend his hand to the works of Denithae, the Giver of Grain. A friend to farmers everywhere, the druid made a reputation throughout the Northlands as an oracle and forecaster of nature's bounty. When it was favored by Gwervanon, the harvest was unsparing. Fields grew plenteous, and the mills of the lord-barons overflowed with grain.

Gwervanon's works were deemed good by Denithae, and three servants were sent to aid him. The blink dogs Sissuf, Luxur, and Ophon accompanied the druid on the road, working closely with him to the betterment of all sentient races. Together, they saw hamlets grow into thriving villages and townships, sustained by the grace of Denithae.

At first, this delighted the druid and his companions, but in time they watched in disapproval as decadent rulers gained power, seized food production, and annexed the privileges of civilization for the corrupt and few. Almost beyond explanation, Denithae's abundance brought disease and famine to the poor. Vermin multiplied. Wars were fought over dwindling resources, and the effluence of the city polluted the fair realms that stood before.

Gwervanon withdrew his services and retired to a life of seclusion, disgusted with the prospect of helping men find tyranny. The decades passed. Forgotten by the communities he had helped create, Gwervanon dwelled long on his failures and turned slowly to vengeance. When unscrupulous loggers from Bellscar encroached on his forest home, he finally retaliated. Served by his loyal blink dogs, the wrathful druid stirred up a nest of giant horned wasps. The buzzing swarm descended on Bellscar, tore apart its buildings, and drove away its citizens. From the wreckage, materials were seized and the wood pulp was used to furnish a new nest below ground. In judgment, the shrine to Denithae at Bellscar was destroyed and its relics reclaimed by the angry druid.

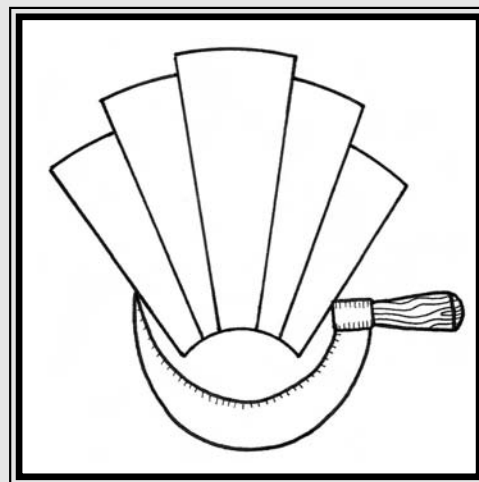
Not satisfied, Gwervanon launched a campaign to undo the evils of civilization, one village at a time. Using his *Crown of the Vermin Lord*, a magic item that permits him to wild shape into vermin form, Gwervanon took the form of a giant wasp queen and laid dozens of eggs.

The larvae hatched soon after. Nursed on the flesh of slain livestock and even townspeople, the larvae matured quickly into pupae and thence into adult soldier wasps. His army ready, Gwervanon's soldiers evacuated Bellscar and descended upon the next town, nearby Dimraven.

The process was repeated and a pattern was born. From the ruins of Dimraven, Gwervanon's horde now comes to the small town of Abingwain (population 1,270), a community of farmers and peasants. Already the merciless insects are sowing terror, attacking the buildings, and making off with horses and townsfolk. The temple of Denithae has been dismantled and the sacred sickle taken from its reliquary. Abingwain's leaders are desperate to retrieve the artifact and defend the town from ruin. Scouts have located an underground nest nearby, but no one has come forward to end the pestilence.

Denithae

Denithae is a neutral-aligned goddess of the harvest and agriculture. She is known to her followers as the Bountiful Breast, the Nurturing Spirit, and the Giver of Grain. Her greatest gift to mortals is the cultivation of soil, but she is also worshiped as a protector and warder against unnatural things. Despite her beneficial attributes, she rarely concerns herself with mortal affairs and is often seen as vindictive when not properly appeased. Counted among her followers are farmsteaders and ranchers, as well as any who depend on the labor of the plow (which includes most urban citizens reliant on agriculture for food). Her domains are Earth, Plant, and Protection. Her favored weapon is the sickle. The symbol of the goddess is a sickle, blade up, with beams rising upward like a rising sun.



Gwervanon waits inside the newly constructed nest, overseeing the colony. New generations of wasps await hatching, and the hour of Abingwain's final destruction is near.

Abingwain (small town): Conventional; AL NG; Population 1,270 (before attack); 800 gp limit; Assets 50,800 gp; Mixed (human 85%, half-elf 10%, halfling 4%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Beliton Bedlenham, landowner, reeve, and chairman of the town council (NG male human Ari11); Alivaric Chanda, high priest of the Temple of Denithae and councilmember, abducted by wasps (NG male human Clr9); Tolo Haltmidge; master shepherd and councilmember (LN halfling Rgr3).

The location of Abingwain is left intentionally vague so as to be easily inserted into existing campaigns. Any community where the PCs can be called upon as the sole protectors will suffice.

Rumor of the destroyed villages of Bellscar and Dimraven has not reached the ears of the citizens of Abingwain. They are taken completely unaware by the swarming insects.

The Wasp Nest

Like normal wasps, giant horned wasps chew bits of wood and debris to make a kind of paste, which they shape into a paper-like nest. The current nest is located 1 mile north of Abingwain in a small forested area. Modeled after the nests of their smaller counterparts, the giant wasp lair is built entirely of wood fibers seized from town, suspended by thick fibrous supports within a deep, underground hollow (see cross-section on page 182). Before playing, it is strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with the three-dimensional nature of the encounter areas.

The envelope of the nest is completely enclosed except for an opening at the bottom. It has the resilience of wood and is flame- and cold-proofed by a special process that incorporates living assassin vines into the paper mesh. The PCs must climb down the sides of this suspended wooden orb or find some other way inside, such as by hacking the envelope (doing this exposes the hacker to attack by assassin vines). At the bottom is the entryway to the nest proper.

A Knowledge (nature) check DC 15 reveals the basic structure of a giant horned wasp nest. Once inside, the PCs encounter a bell-shaped nest, composed of horizontal tiers of combs. Each comb is a six-sided cell made of wood and mud, shaped into different rooms and configurations according to Gwervanon's design. Most of these are formed into brood cells, or nurseries, for larval wasps, but there are also living spaces for the

druid, his dogs, supply areas, and even a shrine where the captured artifacts of Denithae are displayed in mock obeisance to the goddess.

Climbing Revisited

This adventure requires the PCs to make repeated climb checks to ascend and descend various parts of the wasp nest. Recall that climbing is part of movement, so it's generally carried out as part of a move action. Each move action that includes climbing requires a separate Climb check. All climbing movement is at one-quarter normal speed, unless the climber accepts a -5 penalty to move at half-speed.

At various points during the adventure, PCs may wish to use grappling hooks to secure ropes for climbing. This requires a Use Rope check DC 10 +2 for every 10 feet of distance the grappling hook is thrown (to a maximum DC 20 at 50 feet). Failure by 4 or less indicates that the hook fails to catch and falls, allowing the roper to try again. Failure by 5 or more indicates that the grappling hook initially holds, but comes loose after 1d4 rounds of supporting weight. This check is made secretly, so that the PCs don't know if the rope will hold their weight. It requires a DC 5 Climb check to climb an unknotted rope, provided the character has some section of wall to brace against. Otherwise, the check DC for climbing an unknotted rope is 15.

The DC to catch oneself when falling is 20 + the Climb DC of the wall. To catch oneself on a slope, the DC is 10 + the slope's DC. To pull oneself up from a ledge when dangling by the hands requires a DC 15 Climb check as part of movement. To catch someone else within reach requires a successful melee touch attack against the falling character (forgoing any Dexterity bonus to AC if they want to be caught), followed by a Climb check DC 10 + the Climb DC of the wall. Success indicates that the falling character is caught, but if the catching character's heavy load limit is exceeded, both automatically fall. Failing this check by 5 or more means the fall is unsuccessfully arrested, and the helping character falls as well.

A character can use a rope to haul a character upward (or lower a character) through sheer strength. A character can lift double his maximum load in this manner.

Overview of the Nest

The envelope is a roughly circular structure measuring 200 feet in diameter, suspended by fibrous supports within a deep earthen cavity. All sections of the envelope and comb count as wood for game purposes including spell effects.

Unless otherwise noted, all encounter areas are unlit. The wasps and blink dogs have darkvision and do not require ambient light to see. Due to the incessant droning sounds within the hive, all Listen checks made during this adventure suffer a -10 penalty.

Reinforced Paper Envelope: 3 ft. thick; hardness 5; hp 360 per 10 ft. section; break DC 26; resistance to cold 10 and fire 10.

Fibrous Supports: AC 3; hardness 5, hp 600.

Comb: 1.5 ft. thick; hardness 5; hp 180 per 10 ft. section; break DC 22. The comb structure has the same vulnerabilities and protections against attacks as the envelope (see above), except it does not have resistance to cold and fire.

Crude Door: 3 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 30; break DC 18 (stuck).

Because of the flammable nature of the envelope, it is vulnerable to fire (taking double normal damage and ignoring hardness), but due to the incorporation of assassin vines into the paper mesh the entire structure has fire resistance 10. Cold attacks deal one-quarter damage to the envelope (before hardness and cold resistance). Electricity attacks and ranged weapons do half damage. Acid and sonic damage do full damage. Any damage to the paper envelope that is detected will be repaired by the worker wasps in area 2-1. A worker can repair a five-foot section of envelope in 1 minute by applying new globs of wood pulp to the breach.

The comb has the same properties as the envelope, except that it does not have resistance to cold and fire. The ceiling height inside the combs is uniformly 20 feet. The few doors that exist are crude fabrications made using the *wood shape* spell.

Most of the wasps within the nest are either workers or soldiers and have the following statistics. Exceptional wasps are presented in the area entries.

Giant Horned Wasp Worker: CR 1; Large vermin; HD 3d8+3; hp 15; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +8; Atk sting +3 melee (1d3+3 plus poison); Full Atk sting +3 melee (1d3+3 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., suicidal sting, pheromones, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 12, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Spot +9, Survival +1.

SA – *Poison:* Injury, Fortitude DC 12, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Dex.

SQ – *Suicidal Sting:* Each time an enemy fails a saving throw versus its poison, a giant horned wasp must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15) or die immediately.

SQ – *Pheromones:* Once per day, worker wasps can emit a pheromone as a standard action that calls 1d3 soldier wasps to the area. Soldiers called in this manner must be within 100 feet to sense the pheromone and arrive in 1d4 rounds.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldier: CR 2; Large vermin; HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +11; Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); Full Atk sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., suicidal sting, vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Spot +9, Survival +1.

SA – *Poison:* Injury, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex.

SQ – *Suicidal Sting:* Each time an enemy fails a saving throw versus its poison attack, a giant horned wasp must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15) or die immediately.

Important: There are 25 giant horned wasp soldiers in the nest. Keep track of those called throughout the adventure. When 25 are slain, no more will come when called. There are 50 worker wasps in total.

Finally, the blink dogs Sissuf, Luxur, and Ophon continue to serve Gwervanon. Despite their originally good dispositions, they have succumbed to Gwervanon's madness and become evil-natured. Their statistics are given below for convenience.

Advanced Blink Dog: CR 3; Medium magical beast; HD 7d10; hp 39; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk bite +7 melee (1d8); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d8); SQ Blink, darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, low-light vision, scent; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +5, Listen +7, Sense Motive +3, Spot +7, Survival +4; Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Run, Track.

SQ – *Blink:* A blink dog can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

SQ – *Dimension Door:* A blink dog can teleport, as *dimension door* (caster level 8th), once per round as a free action. The ability affects only the blink dog, which never appears within a solid object and can act immediately after teleporting.

The blink dogs have memorized the exact layout of the nest, enabling them to use their *dimension door* ability with perfect accuracy to teleport anywhere within the complex (maximum range 720 feet). Also, before entering combat the first time, the blink dogs make use of their *enchanted dog bowls* (see area 5-4).

Wandering Monsters

There is a 30% chance per ten minutes that the PCs will come across a random encounter. Randomly determine the nature of the encounter by rolling 1d6:

| 1d6 | Encounter |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1-3 | 1 blink dog (Sissuf, Luxur, or Ophon) |
| 4-5 | 1d3 giant horned wasp soldiers |
| 6 | 1d4+1 giant horned wasp soldiers |

If a blink dog is encountered as a wandering monster, it will attack for 1d3 rounds then *dimension door* away to regroup.

Player Beginning

For whatever reason, the PCs have agreed to help the citizens of Abingwain destroy the wasps and recover the *Sickle of Denithae*. In haste, the town council has amassed a reward of 2,500 gp to investigate and clear the nest. The clergy of Denithae offers an additional 2,500 gp to recover the *Sickle of Denithae*.

The Abingwainers provision the PCs with one climbing kit and one vial of antitoxin for each PC present, plus flint and steel, six 50-foot lengths of hemp rope, 3 grappling hooks, and as many torches as they require. Three *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *potion of neutralize poison*, and a *scroll of lesser restoration* are also given, complements of the clergy of Denithae. Additional mundane equipment can be purchased from the townsfolk at half normal price. Any such acquisitions are deducted in advance from the reward money offered to the PCs.

Read or paraphrase the following:

It came as a nightmare, a curse, a thing of legend: a swarming army of giant wasps, descending in fury upon the sleepy village of Abingwain. What started as a cheerful morning in the shops and fields turned quickly to chaos, as dozens of marauding insects swooped into town. Their attacks were strangely coordinated. It seemed that the principle targets were the buildings themselves, particularly the hardwood frames and supports. Most of these materials were carried away by the wasps, leaving the town in disarray.

You were roused from your beds in time to witness the worst of it. All around, the shops, homesteads, even the temple of Denithae, are sundered, torn apart and looted

by the wasps. What's worse, the High Priest of the Temple, His Plentifulness Alivaric Chanda, was abducted by the swarm, and with him the holy Sickle of Denithae was captured. Barely a third of the town's buildings remain upright, and another wave of the insects is sure to come soon.

Many of the townsfolk are crumpled in the streets, their bodies bloated with poison. Others hide in the standing structures, tending their wounds and planning their defense. Most argue to flee Abingwain, and some have already left. But the leaders of the town council are steadfast. A few intrepid townsfolk have tracked the insects to a gigantic underground nest, located about a mile due north in a small forested area, but no one save yourselves has come forward to end the pestilence.

Compelled to action by the desperate Abingwainers and by the generous sum they amassed as payment, you and your companions set out to clear the nest and recover the Sickle of Denithae. The entrance is just ahead: a tunnel leading far below ground. From the depths emanate harsh droning sounds, and the very ground is a-buzz with the vibrations of the swarm.

Encounter Area 1: Outside the Nest

The adventure begins with the PCs arriving at the entrance to the nest. Refer to the map labeled "Vertical Cross-Section of Nest" for areas 1-1 through 1-4. A tactical map is provided for Area 1-2 (Atop the Envelope).

The PCs may be tempted to burn down or smoke out the nest. The envelope is well-protected from fire, but the combs are vulnerable. The first response will always be to deploy 1d4+1 soldier wasps to attack the arsonists. If flames are allowed to progress, the entire nest will be emptied in defense. What probably seems like a good idea to the PCs can easily turn into a nightmare, as 25 angry wasp soldiers ascend in fury from the smoldering combs, followed by 50 workers, 3 blink dogs, and a vengeful druid.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Entranceway (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you, an unlit tunnel is excavated into the earth at a 45-degree angle. The mouth of the tunnel is roughly 40 feet wide at the entrance, but the shaft narrows to 20 feet in width as it declines perilously some 90 feet into the earth. Sharp stones and the roots of trees protrude from the walls of the shaft. All around the margin of the entrance, you see the bones of animals and other debris ejected from the cave.

Heaps of dismantled furniture, demolishing buildings, and other materials looted from Abingwain are piled in disarray.

There are strange odors coming from the tunnel, suggesting the pungency of nectar. Your torch flames blow black, flaring and smoking, as you peer inside. Ominous droning sounds rise from the depths.

The tunnel descends 70 feet below ground before opening into the roof of the cavern that contains the nest. From the roof, it is a 20 foot drop to the top of the nest envelope (area 1-2). Climbing down the tunnel without the use of a rope requires a DC 5 Climb check. There are numerous handholds and footholds, and ample places to secure a rope. Characters that fall take 1d3 points of damage from scraping for every 10 feet fallen, plus 2d6 falling damage when they plunge 20 feet to Area 1-2.

Inspection of the wrecked furniture reveals any number of mundane possessions, from tools to articles of clothing. Most of the property is ruined.

A constrictor snake lairs in the tunnel about halfway down, amid the exposed roots of trees. It attacks the first person to reach striking distance.

Constrictor Snake: CR 2; Medium animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk bite +5 melee (1d3+4); Full Atk bite +5 melee (1d3+4); SA Constrict 1d3+4, improved grab; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11; Alertness, Toughness.

SA – Constrict: On a successful grapple check, a constrictor snake deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

SA – Improved Grab: To use this ability, a constrictor snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Area 1-2 – Atop the Envelope (EL 7+): It is assumed the PCs climb or jump down to this area from area 1-1, in which case they begin in the space shown on the map for this area (“Atop the Envelope”). If the PCs fly or attempt to scale the cavern wall to area 1-3, this encounter can be bypassed altogether.

When the PCs touch down, read or paraphrase the following, and give the players Handout A:

You set down atop an enormous, orblike structure that slopes down to a gloomy precipice on every side. The orb is suspended by thick,

fibrous supports from the ceiling of an earthen cavity some twenty feet overhead. Each one of these supports is about the size of a large tree trunk. The ground beneath your feet is sturdy, having the consistency of hard wood. At intervals, it is shot through with viny appendages that grope and feel about. Little colonies of mushrooms and other fungi sprout from the precarious surface.

Poised atop the orb are six giant wasps. Looking at the nearest, you see its head is circled by a series of convex eyes, fringed with coiling, horn-like organs. Strong mandibles indicate the mouth. Delicate, six-jointed legs support a body segmented into three parts, the third separated by a slender thread waist. Four transparent wings cover a black carapace with yellow markings.

Despite their dreadful appearance, the wasps take no notice of you. They seem more interested in applying globs of some pasty substance to the orb with their mandibles. More threatening are the vinelike shoots that grope about your feet.

This area is currently occupied by 6 worker wasps making improvements and repairing breaches to the nest envelope. The entire envelope was made with a special mesh of assassin vines. Near the spot where the PCs touch down, one of these assassin vines has broken free to grope at the sunlight pouring in from area 1-1. Unlike a normal assassin vine, this one is firmly anchored to the envelope and cannot move about.

The tactical map for area 1-2 indicates the starting position of the PCs, the assassin vine, and the worker wasps. The map is divided into three spherical zones from the middle outward, indicating the degree of slope. The innermost zone requires characters to make a DC 10 Balance check to move at half normal speed for 1 round. The middle zone requires a DC 15 Balance check. The outermost zone requires a DC 20 Balance check. A failure by 4 or less on any Balance check means the character cannot move for 1 round. A failure by 5 or more means the character falls prone and rolls 1d4+5 feet toward the nearest precipice. It's an 80-foot drop to cavern floor (area 1-3).

Remember that a character without 5 or more ranks in Balance is considered flat-footed while balancing, and thus loses his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any). Any character that takes damage while balancing must make another Balance check against the same DC or fall prone and begin rolling toward the precipice. The assassin vine and wasps are not

subject to these rules (the vine cannot move at all, and the wasps fly with good maneuverability).

In lieu of balancing, PCs may wish to climb their way down the orb to the precipice. The DCs for this are given on the map according to zone (DC 0, 5, and 10, respectively). Once they reach the precipice, the DC is 25 to climb the rest of the way (since they must effectively climb the “ceiling” of the orb’s bottom half, with handholds but no footholds), though characters will probably favor repelling down with rope (a much easier DC 5 with knotted rope).

Hacking the envelope is possible, but once a given 10 foot section has lost 50% of its hit points (180 out of 360), the internal mesh is exposed and the PCs encounter a new assassin vine on that spot. If this is defeated, the rest of the section may be hacked and the PCs can enter the inside of the nest (area 1-4).

PCs may wish to climb or scale the cavern wall with ropes to reach the cavern floor, bypassing the envelope altogether. The Climb DC is 25 for the top half (the ceiling), and DC 15 for the bottom half (the floor). Of course, the easiest way down is by flight or magical means. Ropes and pitons can dramatically reduce the difficulty.

Development: The assassin vine attacks the first character within range, as soon as possible. The wasps, however, do not attack unless the PCs are openly hostile to them or approach to within 10 feet. If the PCs hack into the envelope, the nearest worker wasp will approach and attempt to fill the breach, most likely provoking an attack by the PCs.

Tactics: The viny growths protruding from the envelope are sufficient for the assassin vine to use its *entangle* ability while it focuses on constricting a single target. In the first round of any combat, a warrior wasp uses its pheromone ability to call 1d3 soldier wasps to the area (arriving in 1d4 rounds). Thereafter, it fights normally with its stinger. Any soldier wasps called to the area’s defense will throw themselves heedlessly into battle, stinging fiercely until they are dead.

Immobile Assassin Vine: CR 3; Large plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7); Full Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with vine); SA Constrict 1d6+7, *entangle*, *improved grab*; SQ Blindsight 30 ft., camouflage, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant traits, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 9.

SA – *Constrict*: An assassin vine deals 1d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

SA – *Entangle*: An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 feet of itself as a free action (Ref DC 13 partial). The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to *entangle* (caster level 4th).

SA – *Improved Grab*: To use this ability, an assassin vine must hit with its slam attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Giant Horned Wasp Workers (6): hp 15 each; see stats above.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number if called): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 1-3 – Cavern Floor (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

This is the cavern floor. Overhead, at a height of 20 feet, you see the bottom of the giant orb looming immensely. Piercing the wooden envelope is a circular opening about 15 feet in diameter, which is clearly the entrance to the nest interior. You see many winged shapes moving back and forth inside. The smell of nectar coming from within is sickly sweet, almost overwhelming.

The floor beneath your feet is covered with rocks and fallen debris, including more discarded furniture and pieces of wood.

The ground is level here but covered in debris (counting as difficult terrain).

The blink dog Luxur keeps watch over this area from his position in area 1-4. As soon as he detects the PCs, he will *dimension door* to area 5-5 to warn Gwervanon of the intruders and then prepare the defense in area 2-1. Noticing Luxur before he leaves the area requires a Spot check vs. the blink dog’s Hide skill (+3).

There is nothing of value in this area. However, the wood debris is infested with centipedes. The insects attack if the wood is searched or otherwise disturbed.

Without magical means, grappling hooks and rope are required to gain access to area 1-4 (Climb DC 5 for knotted rope, DC 15 for unknotted rope).

Centipede Swarm: CR 4; Diminutive vermin (swarm); HD 9d8–9; hp 31; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grp –; Atk swarm (2d6 plus poison); Full Atk swarm (2d6 plus poison); SA Distraction, poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage,

swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 1, Dex 19, Con 8, Int 0, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +12, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse.

SA – Distraction: Any living creature that begins its turn with a centipede swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

SA – Poison: Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Dex.

Luxur, Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39; see stats above.

Area 1-4 – Nest Entry (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following, and give the players Handout B:

You stand perilously on the inner surface of the nest envelope. Overhead, you see horizontal tiers of combs, immense in size, forming a bell-shaped nest. Each comb is composed of six-sided cells made of wood and mud. Here and there, you see the remnants of Abingwain fused to the comb walls: a lamppost, a cart wheel, the sign to the Book & House Inn.

Crawling along the outer surface of the combs are dozens of worker wasps, patterning the walls.

Three soldier wasps patrol this area and will engage the PCs if they attempt to enter the nest (area 2-1).

The entrance to the nest is 20 feet above the inside floor of the envelope. Without magical means, grappling hooks and rope are required to gain access to area 2-1 (Climb DC 5 for knotted rope, DC 15 for unknotted rope).

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (3): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Encounter Area 2: Egg Nursery

The rest of the adventure takes place inside the combs (areas 2 through 5). The most mature wasps are found higher up the combs, such that eggs are found in area 2, larvae in area 3, and pupae in areas 4 and 5.

Scaling the inside walls of the comb requires a DC 15 Climb check.

Areas of the Map

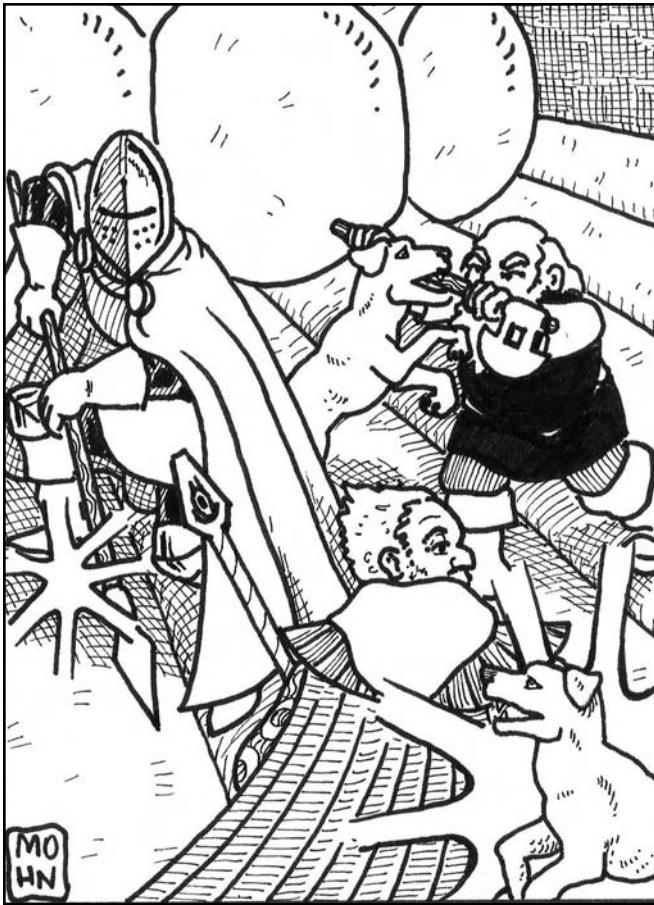
Area 2-1 – Ambush! (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

The inside of the combs is not uniform, but strangely configured into rooms and passages. The hexagonal cells are twenty feet high and interconnected by deliberately-shaped archways and partitions, far exceeding the craft of mere insects. Two archways lead to brood chambers filled with eggs. One section of ceiling is open to the next higher level. While this is easily reachable on the wing, getting to it on foot is another matter.

Assuming that Luxur sounded the alarm (see area 1-3), all three blink dogs lie in wait in area 3-1. They have just eaten from their *enchanted dog bowls* (area 5-4). This means that Sissuf is affected by *bull's strength* for 10 minutes, Luxur by *magic fang* for 10 minutes, and Ophon by *false life* for the next 1 hour. They attack as soon as the PCs are situated in the room, using their *dimension door* abilities to teleport into area 2-1.

Using *warp wood*, Gwervanon has created a simple collapsing floor trap in this area. The dogs are careful to avoid it, but anyone else stepping on the trigger area (labeled "T" on the map) risks falling 20 feet back down to area 1-4.

Tactics: The blink dogs will concentrate on a single opponent whenever possible, attempting to lure the target over the collapsing floor area or back out the entrance. The dogs take full advantage of their *blink* and *dimension door* abilities, constantly changing position on the battlefield and disrupting the tactics of their enemies. Whenever a blink dog is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, it teleports back to area 5-5 to receive healing from Gwervanon, returning to the fray the following round. Gwervanon has 6 potions of *cure moderate wounds* available for this purpose. If the druid runs out of healing, the dogs will return and fight while injured. If one of the dogs is slain, the rest break off the attack and teleport to area 5-5. This ends the encounter.



Collapsing Floor Trap: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; DC 15 Reflex save avoids; 20 ft. fall to area 1-4 (2d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 23.

Sissuf, Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39; see stats above, plus the benefit of *bull's strength* (+4 Str for 10 minutes).

Luxur, Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39; see stats above, plus the benefit of *magic fang* (+1 on attack and damage rolls for 10 minutes).

Ophon, Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39; see stats above, plus the benefit of *false life* (1d10+10 temporary hit points for 1 hour or until discharged).

Area 2-2 – Natal Chamber (EL 1+): Read or paraphrase the following:

This section of comb is filled with dozens of white, sausage-shaped eggs, each about 1 foot in length. A single worker wasp looks after the eggs and appears threatened by your advance.

The worker wasp will use its pheromone ability if the PCs cross the threshold into this area or attack it with ranged weapons.

Treasure: Embedded in the north wall of this cell is a *winged shield*. A DC 22 Search check is required to distinguish the heavy wooden shield from the surrounding comb. The shield is the property of Beliton Bedlengham, reeve and chairman of the town council of Abingwain. It bears his family crest, a dove clenching an arrowhead.

Giant Horned Wasp Worker: hp 15 each; see stats above.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number if called): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 2-3 – Natal Chamber: This area is identical to area 2-2, including the presence of a worker wasp, except that nothing of value can be found here.

Encounter Area 3: Larva Nursery

The wasp larvae encountered here produce a sugary secretion that is overwhelming to human senses. Both Gwervanon and the blink dogs are fiendishly addicted to this substance. PCs must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or be sickened for as long as they remain on this level.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-1 – Natal Chamber (EL 5+): Read or paraphrase the following, and give the PCs Handout C:

The ground here convulses with legless, whitish grubs the size of small ponies. The wormlike larvae twist about, devouring the carcasses of two horses and a cow that were deposited here. Two worker wasps oversee the feeding frenzy and collect a brownish, sugary substance secreted by the larvae.

A cell with an open roof leads up to the next level.

In total, there are 14 wasp larvae scattered about this area, physically blocking all passage. Although the creatures are busy feeding, they will attack the PCs if they explore the room. Unless attacked, the worker wasps will ignore the PCs and continue collecting sugar.

Though crude, the door at the far end of the chamber was clearly fashioned by something other than a wasp. It is locked with an average lock (Open Lock DC 25).

Giant Horned Wasp Larva: CR 1/4; Medium vermin; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +0; Spd. 20 ft.; AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3+1); Full Atk bite +1 melee

(1d3+1); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Giant Horned Wasp Workers (2): hp 15 each; see stats above.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number if called): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 3-2 – Larder: Read or paraphrase the following:

This single cell is provisioned with two small barrels, an amphora filled with wine, a small basket, and a wooden chest. Piles of brown, sugary crystals are stacked upon the floor. A shovel is thrust into one of the piles.

This room is Gwervanon's food stockpile. Apart from the mounds of wasp sugar, the barrels contain bunches of small assassin vine berries and the amphora contains a bitter wine made from these berries. The basket contains 30 *goodberries* (they remain potent for 6 more days).

If ingested, the sugar produces a euphoric effect that is different for each race. Humans, half-elves, and half-orcs receive the benefit of a *heroism* spell for 1 hour. Elves are subject to *crushing despair* for 1 hour. Dwarves experience a loss of appetite and suffer from a *confusion* effect for 5 rounds. Halflings and gnomes burst into gales of *hideous laughter* for 5 rounds. Characters can benefit or suffer from these effects once per day. The effects can be shrugged off if undesired with a DC 17 Will save. If not ingested, the sugar loses its potency in three days. Gwervanon and the blink dogs have overdosed themselves on the sugar and no longer benefit from its effects.

Area 3-3 – Blink Dog Shelter (EL 0 or 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

This single cell is empty except for a thick mat covered in dog hair. There are numerous bones and random objects scattered about that have been extensively gnawed upon.

There is a 40% chance that one of the blink dogs is recuperating in this chamber. Since it has no structural entrances, the room is intended solely for the dogs' use. Some of the bones look disturbingly human.

Treasure: A DC 12 Search check reveals a single badly chewed *slipper of spider climbing*. The slipper is nonfunctional unless reunited with its counterpart (area 5-4).

Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39 or less depending on previous injuries; see stats above.

Encounter Area 4: Pupa Nursery

This level is dedicated primarily to the maturation of pupae, the final growth stage before a wasp metamorphoses into a full adult worker or soldier. The pupae on this level were recently cocooned and pose no threat to adventurers. The doors to areas 4-3 and 4-4 are secured with average locks (Open Lock DC 25).

Areas of the Map

Area 4-1 – Guard Post (EL variable): All of the surviving blink dogs are amassed here on the north side of the entrance hole. They bark ferociously as the PCs ascend into the chamber. Their goal is to prevent the characters from going into area 4-5 and ascending to the next level. If the PCs explore the southern part of this level (specifically, areas 4-2 and 4-3), the dogs will not harass them. Instead, they bark and yelp incessantly until the PCs come across to their side, at which point they attack using the same tactics as described for area 2-1. If one of the dogs is slain, any survivors will break off the attack and retreat to area 5-5.

Advanced Blink Dogs (1 or 2): hp 39 or less depending on previous injuries; see stats above.

Area 4-2 – Curious Statue: Read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead, you see the plaster statue of a man bearing a feathered shield on his left arm. The statue's right arm is missing and the nose is defaced.

To the right and left are chambers filled with wasp pupae. These resemble mummified versions of adult giant wasps. Their cocoons are festooned to the walls by silken threads. Enormous, empty brown cocoon casings are scattered about the floor.

When the statue is approached to within 10 feet, a *permanent magic mouth* effect is triggered, causing the statue to speak words in a throaty voice, "Welcome to Abingwain, hearty traveler! Be merry, and don't be so hasty that you forget to eat. May the Goddess bless and feed you!" All humanoid characters within 30 feet of the statue receive the benefit of an *aid* spell cast by a 10th-level cleric. This benefit can only be gained once per day.

A Knowledge (local) or bardic knowledge check DC 15 identifies the statue as the likeness of Beliton Bedlengham, the reeve of Abingwain, and the shield as being his famous *winged shield*, a family

heirloom. The statue was taken from the town square during the attack and placed here in mockery. Although Bedlengham survived the attack, his *winged shield* was taken and incorporated into the comb structure. It is located in area 2-2.

The pupae are harmless and inert. If attacked, however, they will emit a shrieking cry that summons 1d3 soldier wasps in defense.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number if called): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 4-3 – Plant Nursery (EL 6):

This double cell is provisioned with gardening implements and smells of fresh soil. There are two shovels, a hoe, a watering can, a spading fork, a basket, and a small chest. Near the far wall, there is a 10 foot diameter ball of leaves and vegetation tightly bound in a circular wooden trellis.

The basket holds three large acorns. If planted, these will grow into mature treants in one year.

The chest contains rootstock for making more assassin vines. It is protected by a *fire trap* spell and magically treated to preserve plant matter placed inside it without sun or water for as long as one year. When opened, the rootstocks will twitch and send out little creepers, but are otherwise harmless unless planted. There is enough rootstock left to make 15 assassin vines.

The watering can is a minor magic item capable of creating up to 50 gallons of fresh water each day.

The “ball of leaves” is actually a captive tendriculos bound in a 10 foot diameter trellis of *ironwood* that restricts its movement and penalizes its ability to burst free. Gwervanon intended the trellis as a siege weapon (*repel wood* could move the trellis along the ground, and *dispel magic* could reverse the *ironwood* spell, freeing the creature), but he has neglected it and the bonds are growing weak. If approached to within 10 feet the tendriculos will burst free and attack violently. The carnivorous plant is fatigued and suffering nonlethal damage from malnutrition (this damage can’t be regenerated).

Fire Trap: CR 3; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*fire trap*, 9th-level druid, 1d4+9 fire, DC 13 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27.

Fatigued Tendriculos: CR 5; Huge plant; HD 9d8+54; hp 94 (44 points of nonlethal damage); Init -2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 6, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +6; Grp +23; Atk and Full Atk Bite +12 melee

(2d8+8) and 2 tendrils +8 melee (1d6+4); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA Improved grab, paralysis, swallow whole; SQ Low-light vision, plant traits, regeneration 10; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 28, Dex 9, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 3.

Skills and Feats: Hide +9, Listen +1, Silently +1, Spot +1; Alertness, Iron Will, Power Attack, Stealthy.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a tendriculos must hit a creature at least one size smaller than itself with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can try to swallow the opponent in the following round.

A tendriculos can also use its improved grab ability on a tendril attack. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold, picks up the opponent, and transfers it to the mouth as a free action, automatically dealing bite damage.

Swallow Whole/Paralysis (Ex): A tendriculos can try to swallow a grabbed opponent by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the plant’s mass, the opponent must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds by the tendriculos’s digestive juices, taking 2d6 points of acid damage per round. A new save is required each round inside the plant.

A swallowed creature that avoids paralysis can climb out of the mass with a successful grapple check. This returns it to the plant’s maw, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. A swallowed creature can also cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the tendriculos’s interior (AC 14). Once the creature exits, the plant’s regenerative capacity closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out.

A Huge tendriculos’s interior can hold 2 Large, 8 Medium, 32 Small, 128 Tiny, or 512 Diminutive or smaller opponents.

SQ – Regeneration (Ex): Bludgeoning weapons and acid deal normal damage to a tendriculos.

Area 4-4 – Nectar Trap (EL 2 or higher): Read or paraphrase the following:

This cell is empty except for three small ceramic pots stacked together in the center of the room. A strong, sweet smelling perfume clouds the air.

Using *warp wood*, Gwervanon has created a simple collapsing floor trap in this area. Anyone entering the cell risks falling 40 feet back down to area 2-1. The pots are filled with a rare extraplanar nectar that aggravates giant wasp soldiers. If the trap is sprung, the pots will fall to area 2-1 as well, shat-

tering. This calls 1d4+1 giant wasp soldiers to that area immediately.

If the pots can be extracted from the room somehow without breaking, the nectar fetches a price of 800 gp per pot from the right buyer. However, giant horned wasp soldiers will preferentially attack PCs carrying one of these pots.

Collapsing Floor Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; no reset; DC 15 Reflex save avoids; 40 ft. fall to area 2-4 (4d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (1d4+1): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 4-5 – Natal Chamber: This area is occupied by wall-to-wall pupae. See area 4-2 for a description.

The pupae are harmless and inert. If attacked, however, they will emit a shrieking cry that summons 1d3 soldier wasps in defense.

At the far end of the chamber, a cell with an open roof leads up to area 5-1.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number if called): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Encounter Area 5: Chambers of the Wasp Lord

This level is occupied by Gwervanon's personal chambers and a shrine to Denithae. There are also a few natal chambers filled with pupae. Under Gwervanon's guidance, the growth cycle of these wasps is greatly accelerated. As a result, the pupae on this level are ready to hatch at any moment. The druid makes his final stand in area 5-5, aided by any blink dogs that survive.

The door to area 5-2 is secured with an average lock (Open Lock DC 25). The door to area 5-5 is barred from inside with an *ironwood* crossbeam (Break DC 25).

Areas of the Map

Area 5-1 – Natal Chambers (EL variable): Read or paraphrase the following, and give the PCs Handout D:

These interconnected cells are filled with dozens of wasp pupae cocooned in orderly display. The wasps here are more mature than their relatives below. Horn-like antennae pierce the silky pods to probe creepingly about. You are unnerved by the scrutiny of insectoid eyes from behind translucent membranes.

These wasp soldiers are being grown for the final attack on Abingwain. Every round the PCs spend in this area, there is a 15% chance that one of the pupae will emerge from its cocoon as a fully grown adult soldier and attack. The pupae are otherwise harmless. If harmed in their cocoons, they will emit a shrieking cry that summons 1d3 soldier wasps in defense.

Giant Horned Wasp Soldiers (variable number): hp 32 each; see stats above.

Area 5-2 – Shrine to Denithae: Read or paraphrase the following:

The door opens to reveal a complex ritual space littered with decomposed oak leaves. At one end stands the pristine statue of a robed woman, her body round with an exaggerated bosom. In her hands she holds an offertory dish with a rectangular block of incense placed inside it. Soft yellow tapers burn near the statue's feet, filling the surrounding alcove with light.

Opposite the statue is a crude wooden altar inlaid with symbols in a strange alphabet. The surface is stained with gore, atop which rests the severed head of a priestly man wearing a pontifical cap. A number of religious icons and small urns are placed around the grisly scene.

From another alcove rises a most unusual feature: a gnarled oak tree rotting from within. More icons hang from its sickly droops. You think you see the vague outline of a face on its bent trunk. It seems to regard you with dissatisfaction.

This room is affected by an *unhallow* spell with a fixed *protection from energy (fire)* effect.

The candles provide illumination out to 15 feet, and shadowy illumination out to 30 feet. A Knowledge (religion) DC 15 check reveals the statue to be the likeness of Denithae. It was taken from the goddess's temple in Abingwain and placed here in reverence by Gwervanon. The incense is an unlit block of *incense of meditation*.

The text engraved into the altar is written in the druidic alphabet and reads, "*He who abandons the sickle for the scepter invites Her wrath.*" The head belongs to Alivaric Chanda, the temple's high priest. One of the icons is a *phylactery of faithfulness*. Another gives any follower of Denithae the benefit of a *divine favor* spell cast by a 9th-level cleric, once per day. The urns are filled with the ashes of clerics from other towns, prior victims of Gwervanon's wrath.

The oak is an ancient tree from Gwervanon's home that was hewn by loggers. It was previously *awakened*, and so bears a semblance of human intellect, though it is now dead and harmless. The druid is loathe to abandon it and carts it to each of his new residences. A Search check DC 16 reveals a small hollow, in which Gwervanon keeps his personal wealth.

Locating the secret door to the sacristy (area 5-3) requires a DC 22 Search check. The compartment is opened by pushing in a section of false wall.

Gwervanon awaits the PCs in area 5-5. If the tree or door are tampered with, he will cast *insect plague*, then throw open the door to unleash the swarms into area 5-2.

Treasure: Inside the tree are kept six fire opals of maximum value (1,600 gp each), a black sapphire (1,200 gp), and a *ring of improved climbing*.

Area 5-3 – Sacristy: Read or paraphrase the following:

This compartment is adorned with religious paraphernalia. A simple brown, hooded robe hangs from a hook on the far wall. Vessels are liberally provisioned with herbs, oils, and incense. A gleaming scythe rests in a niche.

The scythe is a +2 *keen scythe*. The herbs, oils, and incense are appropriate materials for casting an *unhallow* spell, worth 6,000 gp in total. The robe is mundane, but tucked inside a pocket is a *scroll of repel vermin*.

Area 5-4 – Blink Dog Chow (EL 0 or 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

Here lie three wooden dog bowls, a few bones, and a single slipper. Sugary crystals are littered everywhere, especially around the dog bowls.

There is a 40% chance that one of the blink dogs is

recuperating in this chamber.

The dog bowls are labeled with the druidic characters for the letters "S," "L," and "O." Each is enchanted to provide a special benefit to an animal or magical beast that feeds from it, once per day, as follows:

Sissuf: *Bull's strength* (+4 Str for 10 minutes).

Luxur: *Magic fang* (+1 on attack and damage rolls for 10 minutes).

Ophon: *False life* (1d10+10 temporary hit points for 1 hour or until discharged).

Treasure: The slipper is one-half of a complete pair of *slippers of spider climbing*. It is nonfunctional unless reunited with its counterpart (area 3-3).

Advanced Blink Dog: hp 39 or less depending on previous injuries; see stats above.

Area 5-5 – Chamber of the Wasp Lord (EL 11):

This encounter typically begins with the villain thrusting the door open to attack the players in area 5-2, while simultaneously releasing swarms of locusts to attack his enemy. Read or paraphrase the following, and give the PCs Handout E:

Hovering in the doorway is a giant wasp with the face of a decrepit old man. Hate-fueled indignation burns in his eyes. The man's teeth are grotesquely decayed, his lips coated in black, sugary stains. With this wasp-like forelimbs, he wields a menacing sickle.

"The earth goes ill and you rejoice. Fools!" he cries, buzzing forward. "The gifts of Denithae are mine to reclaim!"

The room itself is simply adorned with a fur rug (brown bear, 100 gp value), an ewer of water, and a bowl of wasp sugar. A few candles glow

Sickle of Denithae

The wielder of this +3 *sickle* can use *plant growth* and *diminish plants*, each once per day.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *plant growth* and *diminish plants*; Price 37,500 gp; Weight 2 lb.

Crown of the Vermin Lord

This device is a simple circlet of dried weeds twisted into the shape of a winged insect. Any spell cast by the wearer that normally affects animals also affects vermin. In addition, if the wearer has the wild shape ability, he can use that ability to change into a vermin with the same size restrictions as for animal forms. If desired, the wearer can retain his humanoid face in wild shape, permitting him to speak.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *giant vermin*, wild shape ability; Price 36,000 gp.

in dishes. Dozens of scrolls are penned in druidic detailing Gwervanon's manifesto, enumerating the crimes of civilization, abuse of Denithae's gifts, etc. A pair of sandals (mundane) and a broom (actually a cursed *broom of animated attack*) rest near the door.

If any blink dogs survive, they join Gwervanon now. If Gwervanon is slain, he reverts to his natural, half-elven form, an angry sneer forever burned on his face.

Tactics: Gwervanon casts *insect plague* before launching himself into battle. If possible, he will get the jump on the PCs while they are still in area 5-2. In wasp form, Gwervanon uses the *Sickle of Denithae* as a primary weapon and his stinger as a secondary weapon. The wasp's grasping claws are awkward, however, and Gwervanon takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls (already factored into his stat line). Since he does not gain the suicidal sting special quality when wild shaped, he uses his stinger with impunity. Any blink dogs participating in the fight attempt to flank the druid's opponents. If threatened direly, Gwervanon will cast *antilife shell* and flee the nest.

Gwervanon, Venerable half-elf Drd11 (giant horned wasp queen form): CR 11; Medium (Large) humanoid; HD 11d8–22; hp 30; Init +1; Spd. Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8/+3; Grp +17; Atk *Sickle of Denithae* +14 melee (1d6+8); Full Atk *Sickle of Denithae* +14/+9 melee (1d6+8) and sting +8 melee (1d3+2 plus poison); SA Poison, spells; SQ Low-light vision; wild empathy +13, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape, venom immunity, immunity to sleep; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +14; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 21, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +12, Diplomacy +2, Gather Information +2, Handle Animal +13, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +8, Knowledge (nature) +17, Listen +8, Profession (farmer) +14, Ride +3, Search +2 (+4 with secret doors), Spot +8, Survival +14 (+16 in aboveground natural environments); Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe), Natural Spell, Skill Focus (Profession: farmer).

SA – Poison: Injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Dex.

Spells Cast (time remaining): *barkskin* (+4 natural armor bonus, 80 minutes).

Spells Prepared (6/7/5/5/4/3/1, DC 15 + spell level): 0 – *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*(x2), *light* (x2), *mending*; 1st – *cure light wounds* (x2), *entangle* (x2), *faerie fire*, *obscuring mist*, *speak with animals*; 2nd – *summon swarm*, *warp wood* (x2),

wood shape; 3rd – *poison* (x3), *protection from energy*, *spike growth*; 4th – *dispel magic*, *freedom of movement*, *repel vermin*, *rusting grasp*; 5th – *baleful polymorph*, *insect plague*, *wall of thorns*; 6th – *antilife shell*.

Languages: Common, elven, druidic.

Possessions: *Sickle of Denithae*, *Crown of the Vermin Lord*, *stone alarm* (summons surviving blink dogs if activated), 6 (or less) *potions of cure moderate wounds*.

THUS ENDS THE SCOURGE OF THE WASP LORD

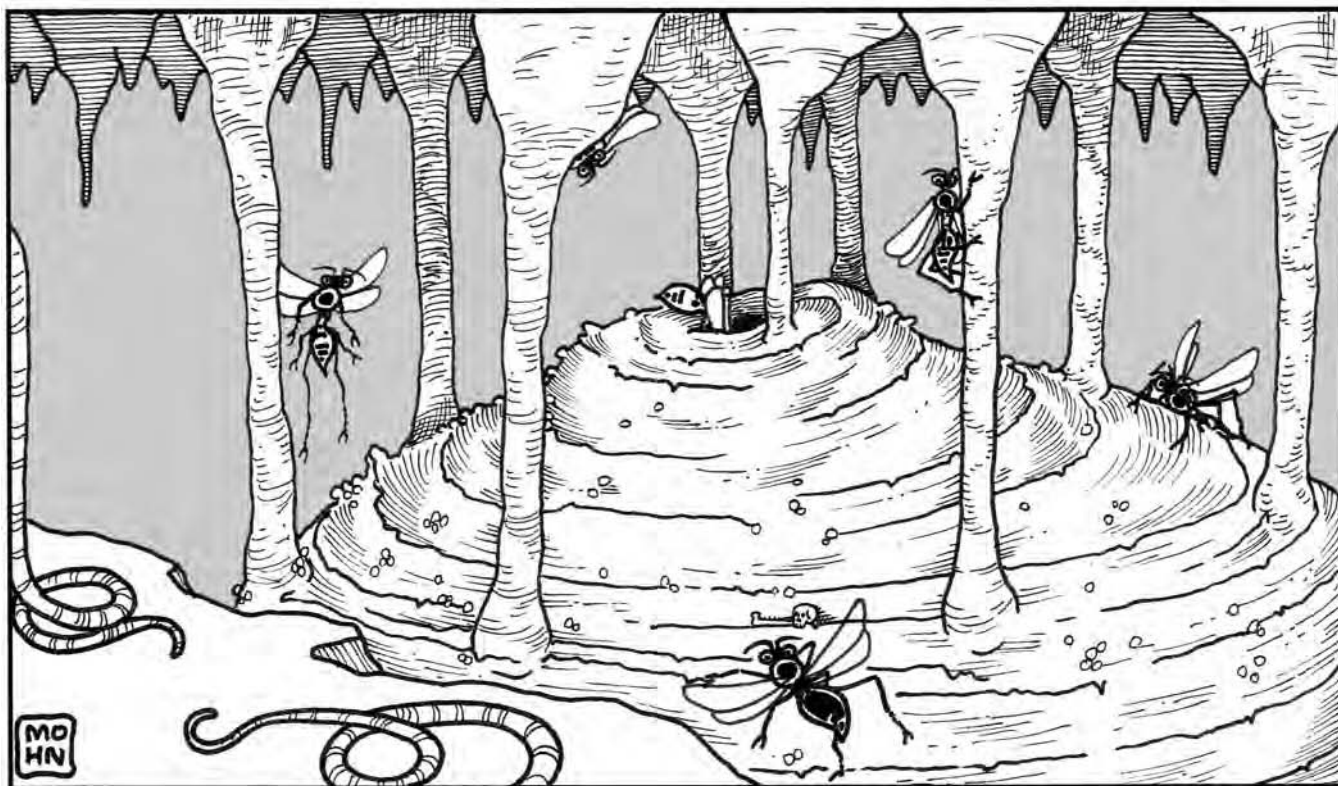
Wrapping Up

With Gwervanon killed or driven off, the wasps in the nest will revert to normal behavior and cease threatening Abingwain. Getting out of the nest may prove difficult, but a number of magic items found on site are useful, particularly the *winged shield* (area 2-2), *slippers of spider climbing* (areas 3-3 and 5-4), and *ring of improved climbing* (area 5-2).

If the *winged shield* was recovered, the Reeve of Abingwain will gift it to the PCs for their valor and name them honorary members of the town council. The Abingwainers pay all reward money promised to the PCs, as appropriate, provided the *Sickle of Denithae* is returned in good faith.

If Gwervanon survived, he will seek retribution in even more elaborate ways.

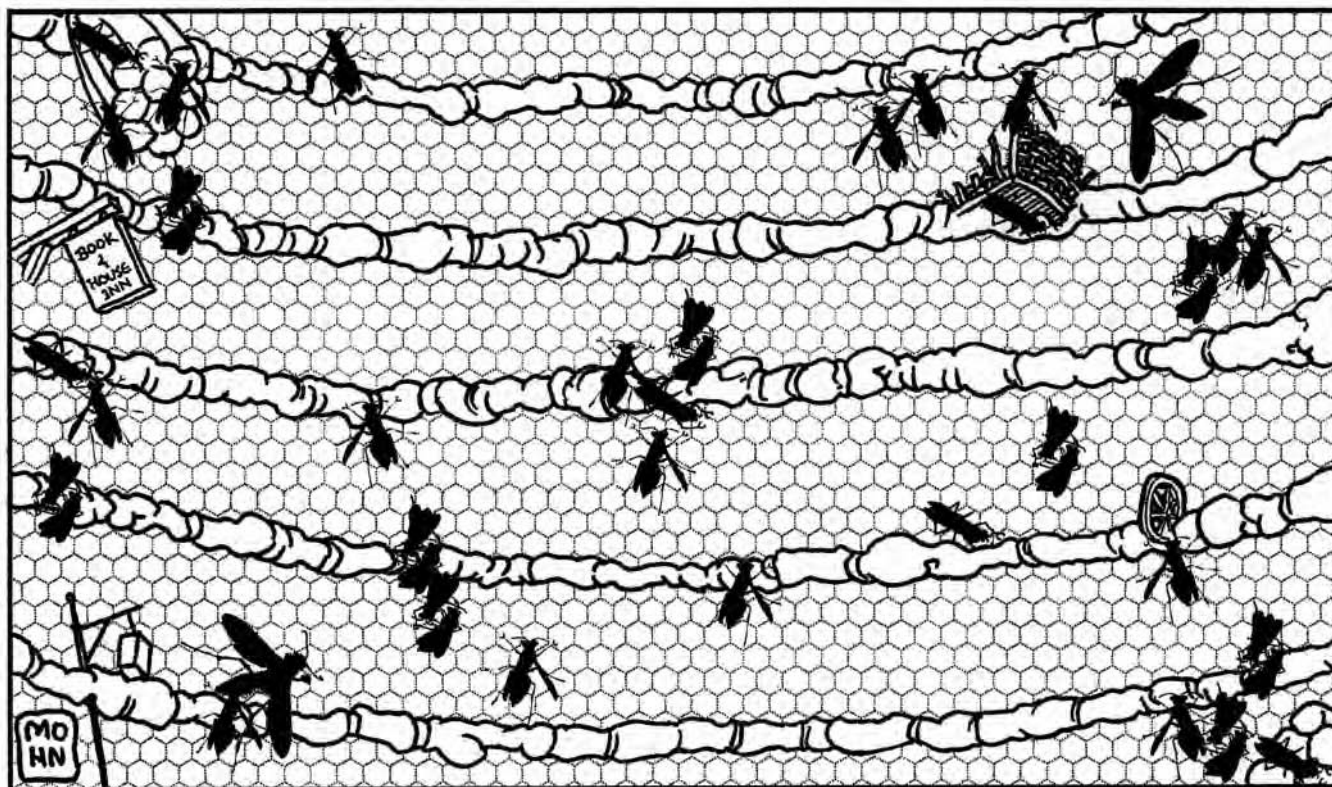
Players' Handout A



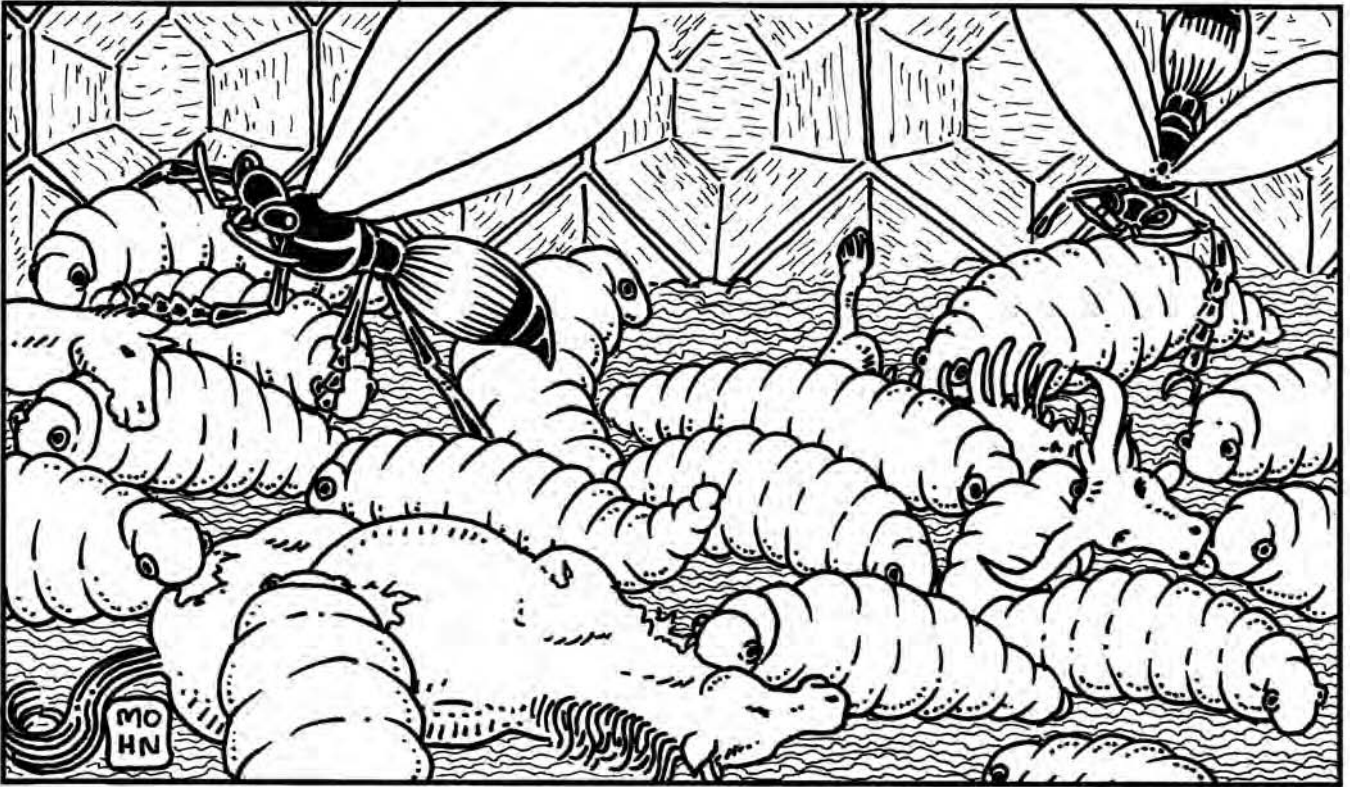
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Players' Handout B



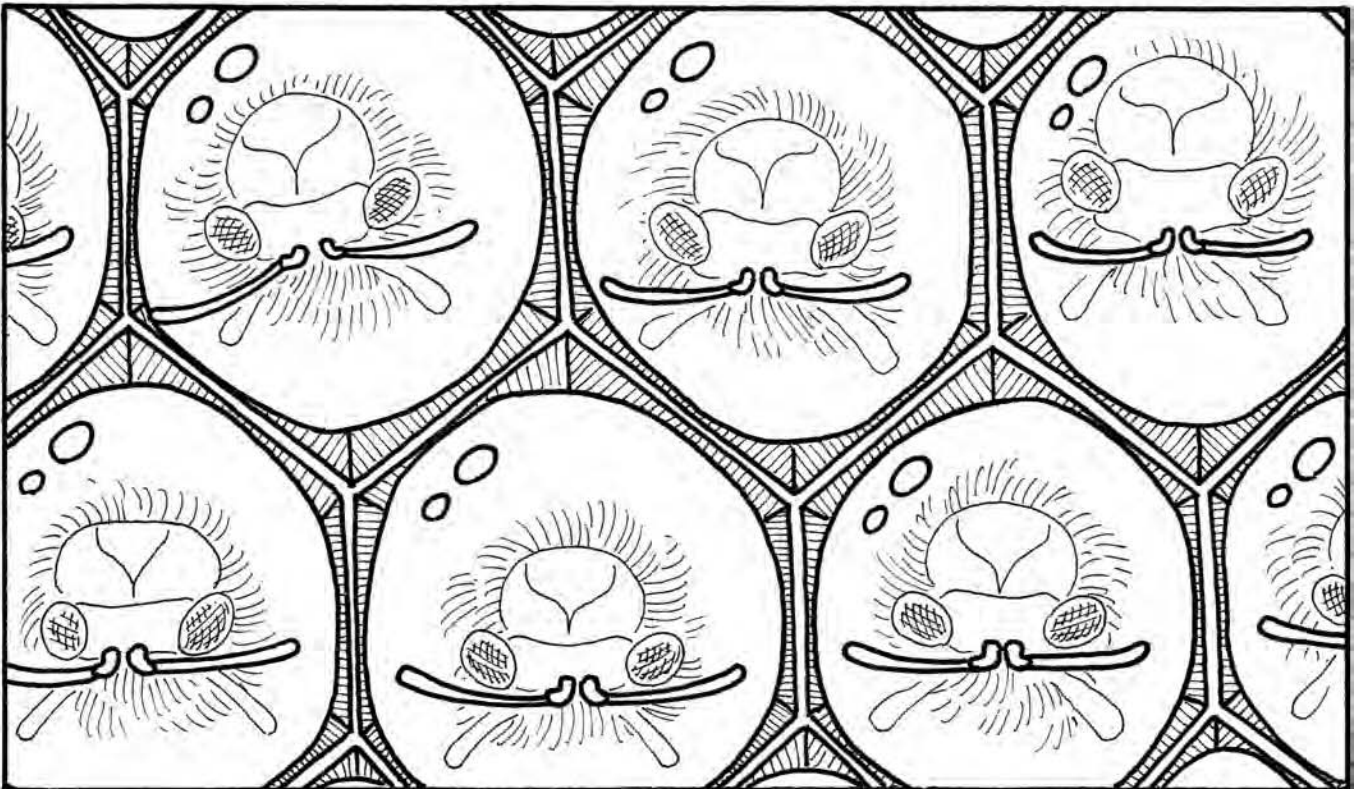
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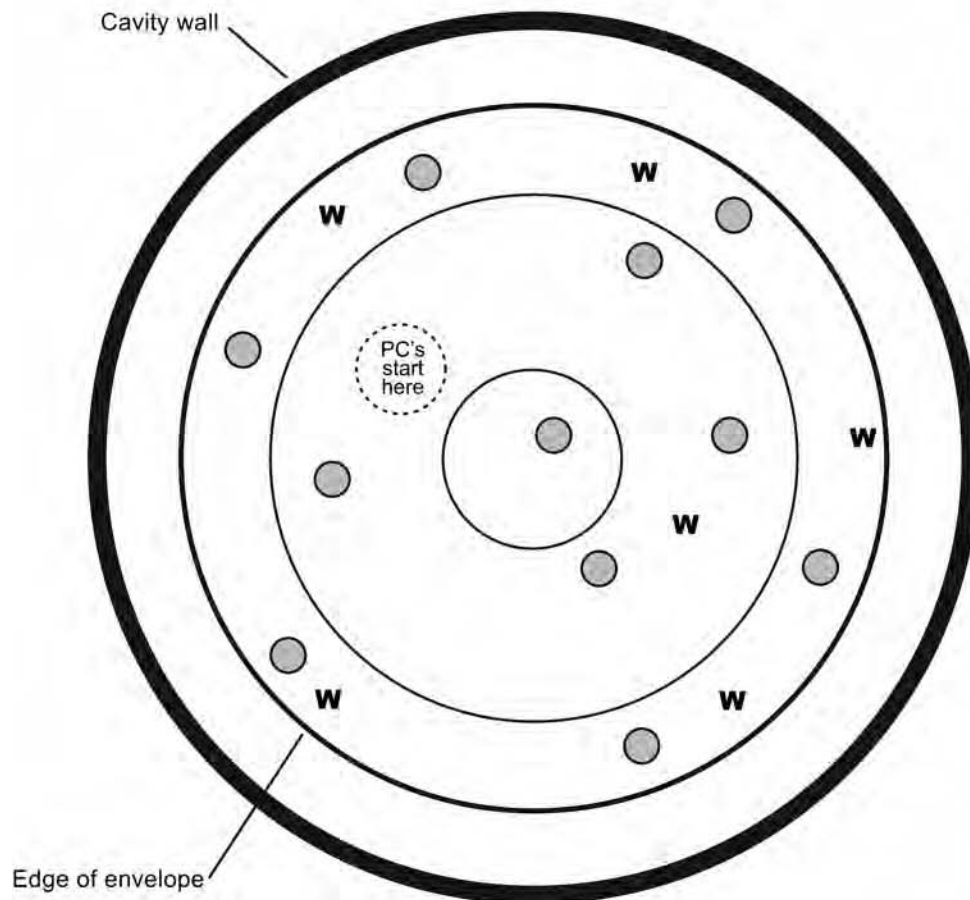
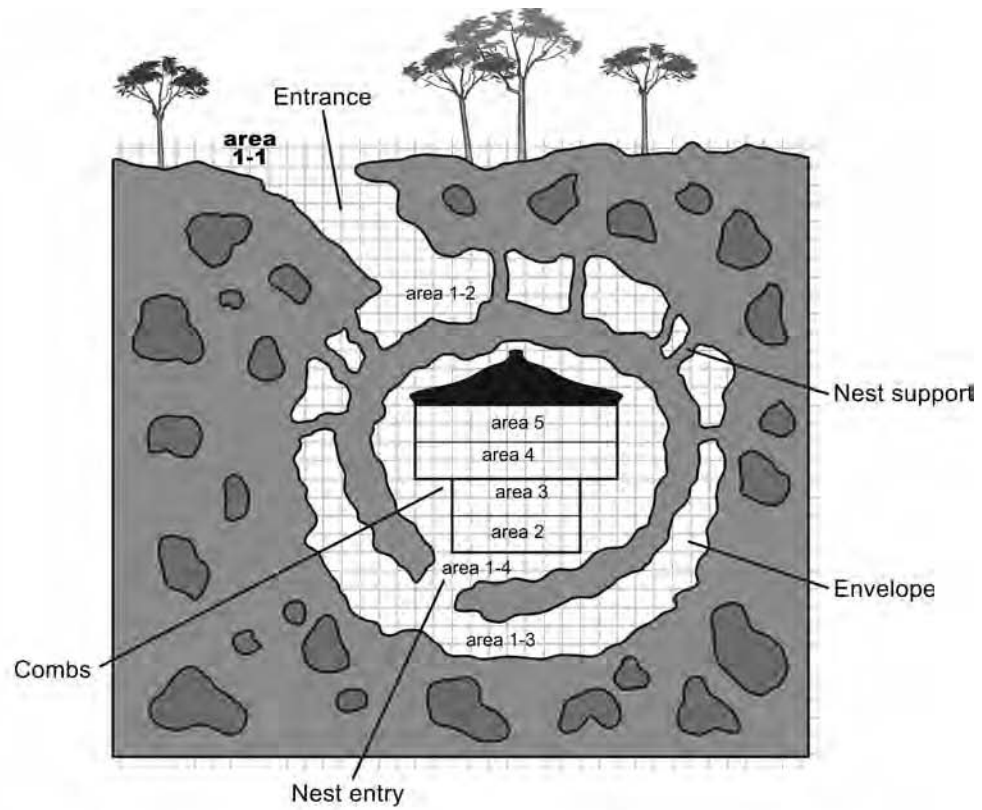
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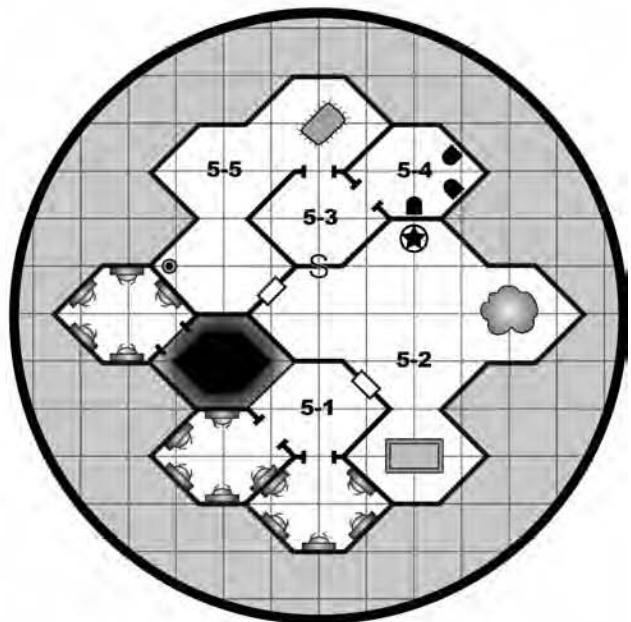
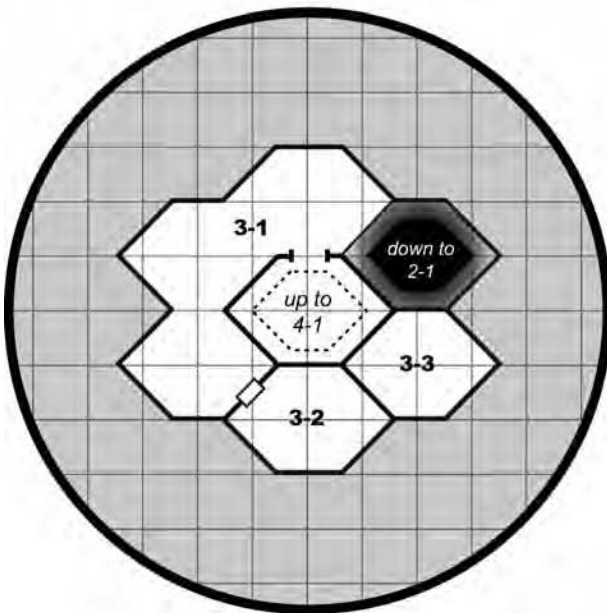
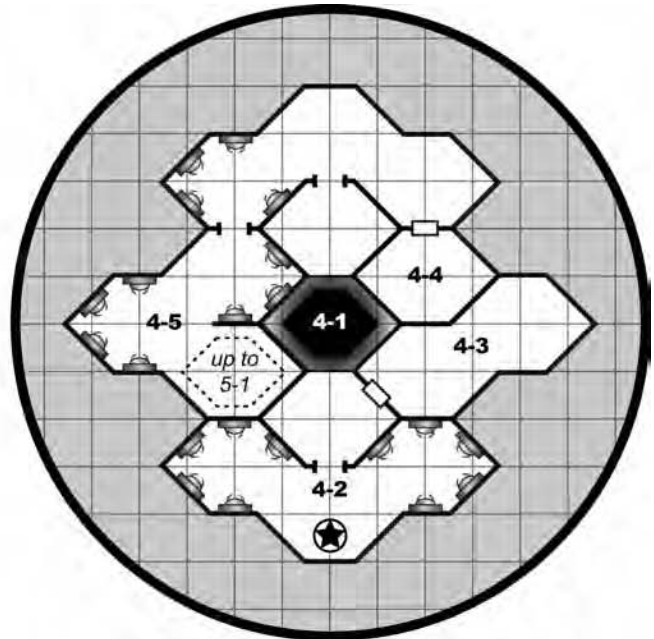
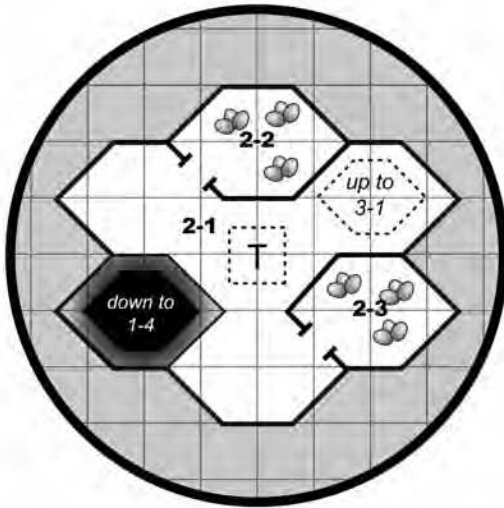
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Players' Handout D









 = 10 ft.

Dungeon Crawl Classics

The Ruby of Rak'shaz

By Artem V. Serebrennikov
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

The Ruby of Rak'shaz is designed for 4-6 characters of 4th through 6th level. An arcane spellcaster is crucial to success in the adventure and can gain the greatest benefit from the eponymous magic item. A rogue's many and varied skills are of big use inside the dungeon, and a cleric with either the Fire or Water domain would also find his abilities in great demand.

Adventure Summary

The ancient sorcerer Rak'shaz embedded his spirit into a magnificent ruby, intending to possess whoever wore the stone and continue his ambitious pursuits. When they crypt holding this gem was reopened, word traveled quickly of the treasure that lay within. The adventurers may only be seeking treasure in this fiery tomb, but – unbeknownst to them – the ruby is seeking a new owner through which it shall continue its ambitious plans!

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle or information (P), or combat (C). Encounter – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. EL – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter | EL |
|------|-----|------|--|----|
| 1-2 | 187 | C | <i>Jawad</i> , magmin Rog2, 2 salamanders | 6 |
| 1-3 | 188 | C | Efreeti | 7 |
| 1-4 | 189 | C | Efreeti statues | 5 |
| 1-5 | 190 | C | Half blue dragon flamebrother salamander | 5 |
| 1-6 | 190 | C | Fiendish winter wolf, 2 hell hounds | 5 |
| 1-7 | 191 | T | <i>Fireball</i> trap | 4 |
| 1-8 | 191 | C/T | <i>Fehim</i> and <i>Gedik</i> , azer Mnk2 plus flame jet trap | 7 |
| 1-9 | 192 | C | 2 steam mephits | 5 |
| 1-10 | 193 | C | Genie engine | 6 |
| 1-11 | 194 | C | Safdar, fire mephit Sor4, 2 jann | 9 |

Scaling Information

Although meant for 4th-6th level characters, The Ruby of Rak'shaz can be run for parties of lower or higher level. Here is some advice for alterations to suit such groups:

Weaker Parties (lower than 4th level, or fewer than four characters): Remove the class levels from Jawad in area 1-1, and remove one of the hell hounds in area 1-6. In area 1-7, have the flame jet trap activate in only one square per round and deal only 1d6 damage (as normal alchemist's fire). Remove 2 hit dice from the genie engine in area 1-10 and reduce its size to Medium. In area 1-11, remove two levels of sorcerer from Safdar.

Stronger Parties (7th level and higher, or more than six characters): Give Jawad an additional level of rogue. In area 1-3, the efreeti is fully alert and does not suffer any penalty to his Listen and Spot checks. Add another hell hound to area 1-6 and an additional steam mephit to area 1-9. Give the genie engine in area 1-10 an additional 2 hit dice. Give Safdar in area 1-11 another level of sorcerer.

Background Story

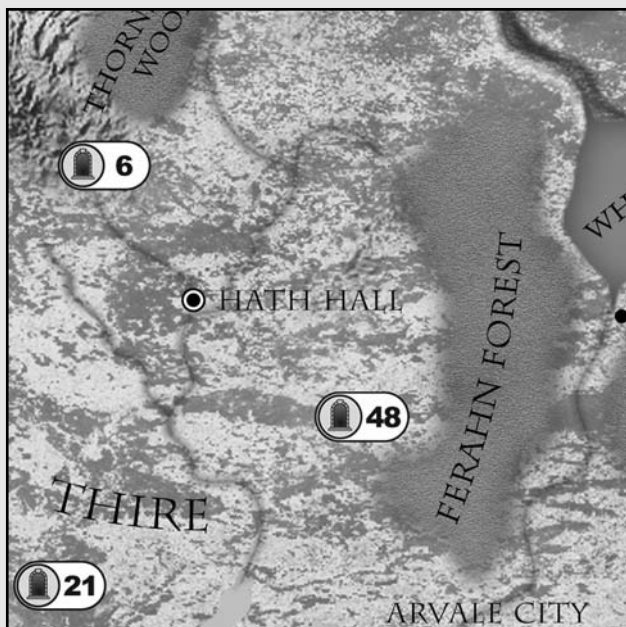
Rak'shaz as-Shahmeer was a potent sorcerer of yore, reputed to consort with genies, fiends and even more mysterious beings. He had no small ambitions of rulership and, using his genie servitors, the sorcerer managed to carve out a small realm, which he ruled as Caliph Rak'shaz. Alas, Rak'shaz's powerful magic could not grant him immortality, and, before succumbing to old age, the sorcerer used a *wish* spell to bind his psyche and body to a magnificent ruby. He hoped that another mage would find the gemstone – and the Ruby of Rak'shaz, encasing his boundless ambition and selfishness, would take over his will. Then the hapless mage would finish what Rak'shaz set out to do.

The Ruby of Rak'shaz, holding the sorcerer's mind and body, was placed at a rather modest crypt beside the Caliph's palace. Several days after Rak'shaz's death, an earthquake ravaged the capital of his realm, and a sandstorm buried the ruins. Most of the genie slaves broke free, save for the ones either *dominated* by the Ruby or extremely loyal to the deceased sorcerer. Over time, the deeds of Rak'shaz became the stuff of legends and fantastic poems. Meanwhile, the gemstone was claimed by Safdar, the Caliph's fire mephit minion and an aspiring sorcerer, who then converted the crypt into an approximation of Rak'shaz's court. The Caliph's psyche didn't object, convinced that Safdar is only the first and the least successful of its future disciples.

Recently, another sandstorm has uncovered the crypt. The Ruby of Rak'shaz, tired of its old master, yearns to leave the confines of the edifice – and an adventuring party seems to be the right vehicle.

DCC World

Hidden amid the ever-shifting sands of the northern Xa Deshret, the buried tomb of Rak'shaz as-Shahmeer has lain undisturbed for centuries. Protected by fierce sandstorms and deadly desert natives, the mysteries of the caliph are not expected to ever be uncovered.



Getting the Players Involved

Here are several adventure hooks that may motivate the PCs to participate in the adventure:

- Nomads speak of a great witchery that has resurged in the desert, recite ancient ballads about Rak'shaz's (mis)deeds and turn more aggressive and less predictable. A sheik with a more peaceful demeanor is willing to offer a reward to capable adventurers that dare to enter the crypt and investigate it.
- The crypt may be rumored to contain a particular magic item that the PCs desperately need for an unrelated purpose. After an arduous quest, they manage to uncover a map showing the dungeon's location.
- A summoning spell cast by the party's arcane spellcaster suddenly goes awry, calling forth a noble djinni. The creature announces that it has been searching for the right candidate to clean out Rak'shaz's crypt. The djinni promises a generous reward – as substantial, in fact, as a *wish* granted to each PC! (Its true motives are left to your discretion.)

The Dungeon

Unless otherwise noted in the room's description, read-aloud text, or this paragraph, all areas of the adventure have the following features:

Lighting: Each room inside the crypt is illuminated by two *everburning torches*, typically positioned on opposite walls.

Ceilings: The typical height of the dungeon's ceilings is 20 feet.

Walls: All walls in the dungeon are reinforced masonry walls (hardness 8, 180 hp, break DC 45, Climb DC 15), glossy and black in color.

Floors: The floors of the Caliph's crypt are impeccably smooth and polished, demonstrating the superior building skills of yore. They impose no penalty on movement or skill checks.

Doors: All doors in the dungeon are made of brass (hardness 9, 50 hp, break DC 25). Unless otherwise noted, a typical door is closed but not locked. Doors in rooms with above-average temperature are extremely hot to the touch, dealing 1d4 points of fire damage to an unprotected creature that touches it (no save).

Temperature: Some rooms, due to specially designed magical effects, have higher temperature than the others (the typical temperature of this dungeon's areas is

no higher than 90° F). This may prove hazardous to unprepared characters.

Intense heat: In a room of intense heat (above 110° F), a character must make a Fortitude save once every 30 minutes (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Characters wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a –4 penalty on their saves. A character with the Survival skill may receive a bonus on this saving throw and may apply this bonus to other characters as well. Characters reduced to unconsciousness begin taking lethal damage (1d4 points per each 10 minute period).

Extreme heat: Rooms with air temperature over 140° F are considered extreme heat and deal lethal damage. Breathing air in these temperatures deals 1d6 points of damage per minute (no save). In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save every 5 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Those wearing heavy clothing or any sort of armor take a –4 penalty on their saves. In addition, those wearing metal armor or coming into contact with very hot metal are affected as if by a *heat metal* spell.

A character who takes any nonlethal damage from heat exposure suffers from heatstroke and is fatigued. These penalties end when the character recovers the nonlethal damage she took from the heat. A character with fire immunity or resistance to fire is considered protected and suffers no ill effects.

Shield of the Elements: In his lifetime, Rak'shaz had taken due precautions to protect his crypt's guardians from jealous priests. Due to a unique magical effect, all creatures with the fire subtype gain +2 turn resistance against turn/rebuke attempts made by clerics with Fire or Water domain.

Mephits: All monsters designated as mephits have the following feature in common:

Summon Mephit (Sp): Once per day, a mephit can attempt to summon another mephit of the same variety, much as though casting a *summon monster* spell, but with only a 25% chance of success. Roll d%: On a failure, no creature answers the summons that day. A mephit that has just been summoned cannot use its own summon ability for 1 hour. This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Entrance to the Crypt (EL –): Read or paraphrase the following:

The hall is decorated with astonishingly skillful mosaics that depict four bizarre landscapes: an infinity of clouds, a charred land with a skyline consumed by fire, a majestic cityscape of an unknown realm and an endless sandy desert under a searing sun. Four statues of bearded men, clad in outlandish outfits, wearing turbans and holding staffs in their hands, stand in the corners.

The hall was envisioned by Rak'shaz as a means of warning off potential intruders (and inciting more capable adventurers to action). The landscapes are, respectively, the Elemental Planes of Air and Fire, the capital of his realm and the desert that occupied a large part of its territory. The statues are, in fact, petrified viziers of the Caliph (male human Wiz9), reduced to their present state by the paranoid sorcerer. Each of the "statues" has a *magic mouth* (caster level 20th) cast upon it, which triggers when a character breaks the silence of the hall. All four magic mouths speak the following in perfect unison:

Know ye that ye trespass upon a holy ground. Here, Caliph Rak'shaz as-Shahmeer the Magnificent, defying the will of jealous gods and rival magi, hath placed his most beloved possession. The Ruby of Rak'shaz, a peerless gem where his indomitable spirit and his intact flesh hitherto linger and await revival, shalt be yours if ye brave the crypt's dangers, battle the Caliph's servants and wrestle the Ruby from another mage's arms. May the immortal spirit of Rak'shaz as-Shahmeer find ye worthy!

After saying that, the statues remain silent for the rest of the adventure.

Area 1-2 – Playing with Fire (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

This rather spartanly furnished room contains a metal table with three metal chairs. Two short reptilian creatures whose bodies seem to be made of lava and a short, mischievous-looking humanoid of similar body texture seem to be engaged in a game of chance.

Creatures: Two salamanders of the lowest rank were punished for misbehavior and charged with guard duty. When Rak'shaz was alive, the flamebrothers strived to regain his favor, but, with Safdar in power, they reverted to their old ways and spend

their time gambling with a magmin called Jawad, the Caliph's former jester. Surprisingly enough, the playful elemental doesn't cheat and his jokes are even somewhat funny.

Tactics: Even when paying superficial attention (assume that all three creature roll 5 for their Listen checks), the guards aren't completely oblivious. If they detect the PCs, the salamanders grab their spears and ready them against a charge, while the magmin hides under the table. The flamebrothers fight in cooperation with Jawad, who darts from his hiding when the time is right and always changes his position in order to flank and sneak attack an enemy. Jawad can cause great harm to the PCs' equipment, but he avoids prolonged combats and runs away to warn the efreeti in area 1-3 if the battle is not in his favor. The salamanders behave in a similar way.

Treasure: The stakes in the game are valuable gemstones [alexandrite (400 gp), violet garnet (600 gp), white opal (800 gp)], as well as numerous tiny pieces of quartz of little value (100 gems worth 4 gp each). The chalcedony dice are worth 300 gp to a dedicated collector.

Jawad, Magmin Rog2: CR 4; Small elemental (extraplanar, fire); HD 2d8+2d6+8; hp 24; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +2; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee touch (1d8 fire plus combustion, burning touch) or +5 melee (1d3+3 plus combustion, slam); SA combustion (Reflex DC 13), fiery aura (Fort DC 13), sneak attack +1d6; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., elemental traits, evasion, immunity to fire, melt weapons (Fort DC 13), vulnerability to cold; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Hide +9, Perform (buffoonery) +5, Spot +3, Tumble +7; Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (burning touch).

Languages: Ignan.

Combustion (Ex): Anyone Jawad touches must succeed on a DC 13 Reflex save or take an extra 1d8 points of fire damage as clothes ignite or armor becomes searing hot. The damage continues for another 1d4+2 rounds after Jawad's last successful attack. Jawad can also ignite flammable materials with a touch.

Fiery Aura (Ex): Anyone within 20 feet of Jawad must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of heat damage per round from the intense heat.

Melt Weapons (Ex): Any metal weapon that strikes Jawad must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or melt away into slag.

Possessions: brass circlet with a fire opal

(1,300 gp), brass pendant with a golden yellow topaz (500 gp).

Flamebrother Salamanders (2): CR 3; Small outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +4; Grp +1; Atk +6 melee (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 fire, spear); Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+1/x3 plus 1d6 fire, spear) and +4 melee (1d4 plus 1d6 fire, tail slap); SA constrict (1d4 plus 1d6 fire), heat, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Craft (blacksmithing) +8, Hide +12, Listen +11, Move Silently +6, Spot +11; Alertness, Multiattack.

Languages: Ignan.

Constrict (Ex): A salamander deals automatic tail slap damage (including fire damage) with a successful grapple check.

Heat (Ex): A salamander generates so much heat that its mere touch deals additional fire damage. Salamanders' metallic weapons also conduct this heat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a salamander must hit a creature of up to one size larger than itself with its tail slap attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Possessions: Small longspear.

Area 1-3 – The Relaxing Efreeti (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

The mosaics on this room's walls depict battle scenes in which two genie races seem to be the principal combatants. The most remarkable feature of this room, however, is a gigantic bathtub filled with boiling water, complete with a huge dragon-shaped faucet and a red-skinned creature seemingly enjoying the heat.

The temperature of this room is high enough to be considered intense heat (see Dungeon Features, page 186).

The bathtub is actually a magical device (moderate aura of conjuration and evocation) created by Rak'shaz and presented to Sartaj, his most dedicated genie servant. While fully immersed in the sizzling-hot water, any creature with the fire subtype gains fast healing 2. Moreover, once a minute the faucet exhales a stream of boiling water mixed with brimstone, dealing 4d6 points of fire damage to any creatures without immunity to fire in a 15-foot cone (use the intersection occupied by the tub as a point of origin). The tub and all of its component parts are made of brass and are 15 feet high; it is extremely

difficult to climb into it (a DC 25 Climb check) unless the creature is tall enough. Note that total immersion in boiling water deals 10d6 points of fire damage per round!

Creature: The relaxing creature is Sartaj, a selfish efreeti with a love of comfort. It has earned an endless vacation through his service to Rak'shaz and spends entire months without leaving the bath. Naturally, it has become less aware over time and takes a –10 circumstance penalty to all Listen and Spot checks (included in the stat block along with the fast healing bestowed by the tub). Due to this fact, the PCs have a good chance of slipping past the relaxing efreeti without starting a potentially lethal battle.

Tactics: If the PCs fail to sneak past Sartaj or decide to engage him in melee, the efreeti fights in a fairly straightforward yet lucid manner. He prefers to stay inside the tub, harassing the characters with his quickened *scorching ray* and other offensive spell-like abilities (particularly *wall of fire*). Should the PCs remain fairly healthy after three rounds, the irate efreeti engages one of the party members in melee. If clearly on the winning side, Sartaj demands that the PCs surrender (and gleefully cooks them in boiling water if they do). Otherwise, the monster attempts to slip away in *gaseous form* if reduced to 20 hp or less and sets up an ambush in another room.

Treasure: Hidden under the tub (Search DC 20) are a large ruby (2,000 gp) and the keys to the cage in area 1-6.

Sartaj, Efreeti: CR 8; Large outsider (fire, extraplanar); HD 10d8+20; hp 65; Init +7; Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect); AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +10; Grp +20; Atk +15 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 fire, slam); Full Atk +15 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 fire, 2 slams); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA change size (DC 13), heat (1d6 fire), spell-like abilities; SQ change shape, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to fire, plane shift, telepathy 100 ft., vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +15, Craft (blacksmithing) +14, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Intimidate +17, Listen +5, Move Silently +16, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +14, Spot +5; Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (scorching ray).

Languages: Auran, Common, Ignan, Infernal.

Change Size (Sp): Twice per day, Sartaj can magically change a creature's size. This works just like an *enlarge person* or *reduce person* spell (the



efreeti chooses when using the ability), except that the ability can work on Sartaj. A DC 13 Fortitude save negates the effect. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Heat (Ex): Sartaj's red-hot body deals 1d6 points of extra fire damage whenever it hits in melee, or in each round it maintains a hold when grappling.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic*, *produce flame* (+13 ranged touch), *pyrotechnics* (DC 14), *scorching ray* (+13 ranged touch, 1 ray only); 3/day—*invisibility*, *wall of fire* (DC 16); 1/day—grant up to three *wishes* (to nongenies only), *gaseous form*, *permanent image* (DC 18). Caster level 12th.

Change Shape (Su): Sartaj can assume the form of any Small, Medium, or Large humanoid or giant.

Area 1-4 – The Altar of Desire (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

An enormous tabernacle dominates the room, decorated with weird arcane symbols and inscriptions. Incense rises from two braziers that flank the altar. Two statues, cast from a reddish metal and depicting falchion-wielding giants with small horns and protruding tusks, seem to stand guard in the chamber.

The altar does not honor any deity; in fact, it was erected as a testimony of Rak'shaz's ambition to rule. The Altar of Desire is magically connected to

the Elemental Plane of Fire. In his lifetime, the Caliph used it to communicate with the Sultan of the Efreet and coerce him to fulfill his ever-growing demands. By creatures other than Rak'shaz, the Altar can be used to gain knowledge and fulfill one's most selfish wishes (see below for more details).

Creatures: The room is guarded by 2 animated brass statues, cast in the likeness of efreet. They diligently carry out their master's last order – kill all that approach the Altar without Rak'shaz's permission.

Tactics: The statues attack any character that comes within 5 feet of the Altar. Their tactics are very straightforward: the constructs keep swinging their weapons at the closest target until they or their opposition are destroyed.

The Altar of Desire: The most prominent feature of this room is carved from a single massive granite block; many sigils and writings are etched into its face. The Altar radiates an overwhelming aura of evil, law and divination magic. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) check identifies the sigils as characters of the Draconic alphabet with an underlying mystical meaning: they are associated with power, flame, tyranny and desire. In addition, the Altar bears an inscription in Common:

I am the Most Exalted Sultan of the Efreet, a ruler stern but just. Invoke My title, present thy gift and speak thy desire; it shall be fulfilled if thou art worthy. Say that thou seekest My wisdom, and thy question shall be answered.

The Tabernacle can be used in two ways. First, if a character proclaims he is seeking the Sultan's wisdom, he is entitled to the effects of a *contact other plane* spell (caster level 20th; the entity in question is the Sultan himself, so see the "Elemental plane" line on the table in the spell's description). This power works once per day. Second, if a character presents his desire in an appropriate manner, it may be fulfilled, as per the *limited wish* spell (caster level 20th). However, the Sultan can (and will) pervert the wish if it does not serve a particularly evil and selfish purpose; he will not even consider fulfilling it if a gift of at least 100 gp value is not put on the Altar (when the wish is granted, the gift is consumed by fire). A character can benefit from this power only once in a lifetime.

Efreeti Statues, Large animated objects (2): CR 3; Large construct; HD 4d10+30; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (2d6+4/18-20, masterwork falchion); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA –; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., hardness 9,

low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

Hardness (Ex): The statues are made of brass and have hardness 9.

Possessions: Large masterwork falchion.

Area 1-5 – The Red-Blue Dragon (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This otherwise empty room features a miniature brass throne. A strange creature with a body of a fiery salamander but the scales and the horn of a desert dragon occupies it. The being welcomes your arrival with a harsh glare and the following words: “Waheed, the child of fire and lightning, fears you not. You are doomed, outlanders.”

The temperature of this room is high enough to be considered intense heat (see Dungeon Features, page 186).

Creatures: One of the countless magical experiments carried out by Rak’shaz was an attempt to infuse a salamander larva with dragon blood. After many tries, the sorcerer finally managed to hybridize a flamebrother salamander with a blue dragon. The resulting creature, called Waheed, became one of the Caliph’s favored minions. After the sorcerer’s disappearance, Waheed spends most of its time in luxury and leisure, giving his mephitis errands after errands.

Tactics: Haughty and overconfident, Waheed is convinced that it can defeat the toughest opponent. The half-dragon typically starts combat with his breath weapon attack, unless the opponents are in a highly dispersed formation. Then, Waheed goes toe to toe with the most powerful-looking PC, thrusting with its small-but-dangerous spear until the interlopers run away or the creature meets its doom.

Waheed, Half Blue Dragon Flamebrother Salamander: CR 5; Small dragon (augmented outsider, extraplanar, fire); HD 4d10+12; hp 34; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk +11 melee (1d6+6/x3 plus 1d6 fire, +1 spear); Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+6/x3 plus 1d6 fire, +1 spear) and +8 melee (1d4+2 plus 1d6 fire, tail slap) and +8 melee (1d4+2, bite); SA breath weapon (Reflex DC 15), constrict (1d4+2 plus 1d6 fire), heat, improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity, fire, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +5, Craft (blacksmithing) +14, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge

(the planes) +6, Listen +11, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spot +11; Alertness, Multiattack.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Ignan.

Breath Weapon (Su): 60-foot line, once per day, damage 6d8 lightning, Reflex DC 15 half.

Constrict (Ex): Waheed deals automatic tail slap damage (including fire damage) with a successful grapple check.

Heat (Ex): Waheed generates so much heat that its mere touch deals additional fire damage. Salamanders’ metallic weapons also conduct this heat.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Waheed must hit a creature of up to one size larger than itself with its tail slap attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Possessions: Small +1 spear.

Area 1-6 – The Caliph’s Mini-Menagerie (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The chamber feels much colder than the rest of the dungeon. A metal cage stands near one of its walls, holding inside it a giant, feral, white-furred wolf with a muzzle over its jaws. Two fiery-red canines with burning eyes seem to guard the prisoner.

Creatures: The menagerie has a most peculiar exhibit: a fiendish winter wolf called Hirgaard, presented to Rak’shaz by a frost giant jarl as a token of appreciation. The Caliph was greatly amused, and used to torment the wolf by putting it in a nearly-unbearable environment. Presently, Hirgaard is being held in a magical cage that allows him to survive without food and water, much like a ring of sustenance (the cage radiates a moderate aura of conjuration magic). The hell hounds placed to guard the winter wolf hold the helpless creature in great contempt.

Tactics: Should the hell hounds encounter intruders, they fight boldly and in concert, using their breath weapons and bite attacks against the most physically weak opponent. When he goes down, they move on to bigger prey. The fiery canines are extremely vicious and fight until slain.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the guardians, they have Hirgaard at their mercy. The winter wolf can’t use any of its attacks while wearing the muzzle, and is practically helpless. Killing it in cold blood would be a evil act, so good-hearted PCs may want to free Hirgaard. The key to the cage is kept by Sartaj (see area 1-3), but the lock can be picked (a DC 25 Open Lock check) or broken (hardness 15, 35 hp). Alternatively, the adventurers can

try bending the cage's bars (a DC 24 Strength check). Removing the muzzle from the wolf's jaws requires a DC 12 Strength check.

Hirgaard is initially grateful for its release. The wolf declares it would like to accompany the PCs on their quest and help them fight his fiery foes. Hirgaard can tell much about the dungeon and the enemies to be faced; however, the beast is too self-absorbed to be consistently helpful. At the first sign of weakness on the PCs' part, Hirgaard attacks with his breath weapon, then makes for the exit. If outsmarted and cornered, the winter wolf bursts into a rage and keeps on fighting until defeated.

Hell Hounds (2): CR 3; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, fire, lawful); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+1 plus 1d6 fire, bite); SA breath weapon (Reflex DC 13), fiery bite; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, scent, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +13, Jump +12, Listen +7, Move Silently +13, Spot +7, Survival +7 (+15 tracking by scent); Improved Initiative, Run, Track.

Languages: Infernal (understood but not spoken).

Breath Weapon (Su): 10-foot cone, once every 2d4 rounds, damage 2d6 fire, Reflex DC 13 half.

Fiery Bite (Su): A hell hound deals an extra 1d6 points of fire damage every time it bites an opponent, as if its bite were a flaming weapon.

Hirgaard, Fiendish Winter Wolf: CR 6; Large magical beast (cold, extraplanar); HD 6d10+18; hp 51; Init +5; Spd 50 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +6; Grp +14; Atk/Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+6 plus 1d6 cold, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA breath weapon (Reflex DC 16), freezing bite, smite good (+6), trip (+8); SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, low-light vision, resistance to fire 5, scent, spell resistance 11, vulnerability to fire; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide –1 (+6 in areas of ice and snow), Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Survival +1 (+5 tracking by scent); Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track.

Languages: Common, Giant.

Breath Weapon (Su): 15-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 4d6 cold, Reflex DC 16 half.

Freezing Bite (Su): Hirgaard deals an extra 1d6 points of cold damage every time it bites an opponent, as if its bite were a frost weapon.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day Hirgaard can make a normal melee attack to deal +6 extra dam-

age against a good foe.

Trip (Ex): If Hirgaard hits with a bite attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent (+8 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Hirgaard.

Area 1-7 – Flaming Repository (EL 4): The door to the room is closed and locked with a built-in lock (DC 30 Open Lock check). Read or paraphrase the following:

The room is a warehouse of sorts, with lines of shelves and weapon racks filled with various sundries.

Treasure: This stockroom holds many and varied objects, most of them mundane items or ordinary weapons. The exact numbers are up to you; you are advised to use this room as an opportunity for PCs to restore some of their possessions they might have lost to Jawad's melt weapons or combustion abilities (area 1-2). In addition, there is some real treasure: a +1 *scimitar*, 20 +1 *arrows*, 2 *potions of protection from energy* (cold and fire), and a small obsidian casket (200 gp) filled with bloodstones (400 gp total).

Traps: The repository is additionally protected with a devious *fireball* trap that uses a visual trigger, located right in the room's center. It is "programmed" to detonate if the visitors don't resemble normal denizens of the crypt and leave the room with some of its contents in their hands or backpacks. Remember that the spell has a detrimental effect on unattended objects!

Fireball Trap: CR 4; magic device; visual trigger (darkvision 60 ft., Spot +20); no reset; spell effect (*fireball*, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 fire, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Area 1-8 – Dancing Fires (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

This room has only two notable traits: small openings in the floor and two stout dwarf-like beings whose bodies resemble hot metal, armed with metallic rods and none too happy with your presence.

The wall opposite the entrance hides a secret door leading to further areas of the dungeon (Search DC 25).

Traps: This room is effectively a trap constructed by an azer engineer to aid the guards. Once it is activated, the mechanism releases jets of particularly powerful alchemist's fire through the openings at

fixed intervals. Each round, on initiative count 0, roll 2d12 (if you come up with identical numbers, reroll one of the dice). Creatures standing on the squares with corresponding numbers suffer the effects of the trap. (Note that the floor has no actual numbers on it: these are a part of the map legend, made for your convenience).

Creatures: Azers are the archenemies of the efreet, so a prince of that race found himself a natural ally of Rak'shaz, who defied and vexed genies as he saw fit. To honor the allegiance, the azer prince sent a number of his warriors to serve the Caliph. Rak'shaz singled out Fehim and Gedik, two young azers initiated into monastic discipline, and entrusted them with guard duty in his crypt. Utterly loyal to their new master, they never leave their post despite the sorcerer's prolonged absence.

Tactics: The monks, completely devoted to their duty, don't take kindly to strangers. If they are aware of the PCs beforehand, one of the azers pushes a secret button that activates the trap, then both of them drink their *potions of resist cold*. In combat, Fehim and Gedik work in perfect unison, using their superior mobility to flank foes and their skills in armed combat to stun them. They resort to ranged attacks if the PCs seem to be powerful in melee. The concept of retreating or surrendering is completely lost on the monks.

Fehim and Gedik, Male Azer Mnk2 (2): CR 4; Medium outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6+4 plus 1 fire, +1 *siangham*) or +6 melee (1d6+3 plus 1 fire, unarmed strike) or +7 ranged (1d2+3 plus 1 fire, masterwork shuriken); Full Atk +5/+5 melee (1d6+4 plus 1 fire, +1 *siangham*) or +4/+4 melee (1d6+3 plus 1 fire, unarmed strike) or +5/+5 ranged (1d2+3 plus 1 fire, masterwork shuriken); SA heat, flurry of blows, unarmed strike; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immunity to fire, spell resistance 15, vulnerability to cold; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6, Balance +5, Climb +8, Craft (gemcutting) +6, Craft (weapon-smithing) +6, Jump +10, Hide +9, Listen +6, Move Silently +3, Search +6, Spot +6, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks), Tumble +10; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Stunning Fist (2/day, DC 14).

Languages: Common, Ignan, Infernal.

Heat (Ex): An azer's body is intensely hot, so its unarmed attacks deal extra fire damage. Its metallic weapons also conduct this heat.

Possessions: +1 *siangham*, 20 masterwork shuriken, *potion of protection from arrows*, *potion of resist cold*, small fire opal (400 gp).

Flame Jet Trap: CR 4; mechanical device; touch trigger; automatic reset; 2 jets of flame (3d6 fire, DC 13 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

Area 1-9 – Mephitis Kitchen (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The room is hot, humid and full of vapor, which is rising from a solid cauldron with a ladle sticking out of it. All manner of kitchen utensils are scattered all around the place, a large stone table in the room's center has several tureens on it, and two small winged humanoids hover amid the disarray.

The temperature of this room is high enough to be considered intense heat (see Dungeon Features).

Creatures: This is definitely a kitchen, where two steam mephits, trusted servants of the Caliph, prepare and deliver food using a special magical ladle akin to a *sustaining spoon*. Although most of the dungeon's inhabitants don't require food, some (as the jann in area 1-11) do, and that is why the mephits are in constant motion. The outsiders also serve as quartermasters, and have exclusive access to area 1-7.

Tactics: The mephits are greatly annoyed by trespassers and tolerate no interruption to their work. In the first round of combat, they grab the cauldron (a move action), then fly over to the PCs and drop it (a free action). Everyone in a 10-foot radius takes 2d6 points of scalding damage (a DC 11 Reflex save for half damage). In addition, a randomly determined PC must make another DC 11 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of damage from the falling cauldron. After this nasty trick, the mephits use *blur* to conceal themselves in the vapor and pester the adventurers with their breath weapons. These mischievous creatures are craven, and fly away to area 1-11 if their lives are seriously threatened. There, the mephits warn Safdar of approaching intruders.

Treasure: The kitchen has little real treasure, but there are several salvageable silver dishes and spoons (worth 300 gp, weight 4 pounds), as well as the magical ladle (treat as a *sustaining spoon*).

Steam Mephits (2): CR 3; Small outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp -1; Atk +4 melee (1d3 plus 1d4 fire, claw); Full Atk +4 melee (1d3 plus 1d4 fire, 2 claws); SA breath weapon, spell-like abilities, *summon mephitis*; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, fast healing 2, vulnerability to cold; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 10, Dex



13, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Escape Artist +7, Hide +11, Listen +6, Diplomacy +4, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings); Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Languages: Common, Ignan.

Breath Weapon (Su): 10-foot cone of steam, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 1d4 fire, Reflex DC 12 half. Living creatures that fail their saves are tormented by burned skin and seared eyes unless they have immunity to fire or are otherwise protected. This effect imposes a –4 penalty to AC and a –2 penalty on attack rolls for 3 rounds.

Spell-Like Abilities: Once per hour a steam mephit can surround itself with a plume of vapor, duplicating the effect of a *blur* spell (caster level 3rd). Once per day it can create a rainstorm of boiling water that affects a 20-foot-square area. Living creatures caught in the storm take 2d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 14 half; caster level 6th). This ability is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Fast Healing (Ex): A steam mephit heals only if it is touching boiling water or is in a hot, humid area.

Possessions: a set of keys to area 1-7.

Area 1-10 – The Sorcerer’s Workshop (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

Cogs, screwdrivers, unfinished automata, and other mechanical gear of all shapes and sizes clutter up this room. In the center stands a weird apparatus that resembles a wheeled barrel with pincers.

Rak’shaz, a highly creative person, experimented with all forms of life. One of his short-lived obsessions was creating sentient automata. The sorcerer achieved his goal by binding spirits from the Elemental Plane of Air to animate his constructs. He called his most perfect achievement a “genie engine,” for the Caliph had bound a djinni to grant a semblance of life to the apparatus.

Because of the room’s cluttered-up state, the entire area is considered difficult terrain. It takes 2 squares of movement to enter a square in this room. The DC of Balance and Tumble checks increases by 5, running and charging are impossible.

Creatures: The genie engine, a genie-powered, intelligent construct with many magical powers, has not received new orders in many years. Still, it is happy to put its abilities to good use should it encounter any trespassers. It was built to serve, and the genie engine shares a bond with the Caliph even after his disappearance.

Tactics: If the genie engine detects the party’s approach, it uses *persistent image* to disguise itself as a part of the junk, then unexpectedly attacks with a *lightning bolt* or *burning hands*. The construct relies on its offensive spell-like abilities, and, after these are exhausted, turns to melee combat, using its powerful pincer to crush opponents. Bound by orders, the genie engine doesn’t value its existence too much and confronts the party until destroyed.

Development: Once the construct is reduced to 0 hp and falls apart, the animating spirit breaks free. A djinni called Fareedoon springs out of the engine’s carcass and thanks the party for freeing it. Fareedoon is a normal (not noble) djinni in all respects, so he cannot grant *wishes*. Nevertheless, the genie is willing to use the few resources at its disposal, such as *create food* if the party is short on supplies or *wind walk* to spirit the adventurers away from the dungeon. Fareedoon is impatient to return to its home plane, so the creature won’t stay for long to aid the PCs; still, they have gained an ally that can serve as a catalyst for future adventures.

Treasure: Buried beneath a pile of junk (Search DC 15) are arcane scrolls of *minor creation*, *major creation*, and *summon monster III*.

Genie Engine: CR 6; Large construct; HD 5d10+30; hp 57; Init +4; Spd 60 ft.; AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk +8 melee (1d8+5, pincer); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+5, 2 pincers); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA constrict (1d8+5), improved grab, spell-like abilities; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, dark-

vision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to cold, low-light vision, resistance to fire 10 and electricity 10; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 11, Con —, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8 (+12 casting defensively), Listen +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +10; Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (pincer).

Constrict (Ex): A genie engine deals automatic pincer damage on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a genie engine must hit with a pincer attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day — *burning hands* (DC 13), *gust of wind* (DC 14), *scorching ray* (+3 ranged touch); 1/day—*create food and water*, *create wine* (as *create water*, but wine instead), *lightning bolt* (DC 15), *persistent image* (DC 17). Caster level 5th.

Area 1-11 – The Caliph’s Throne (EL 9): Read or paraphrase the following:

This grand chamber is literally wreathed in flame. Gigantic spouts of flame rise up to the ceilings, with no apparent fuel and giving off no smoke, generating an abysmal heat. A majestic brass throne shaped to resemble a dragon maw dominates the chamber, with huge brass vases flanking it. Upon the throne sits a comically disproportioned creature, a short, winged humanoid with impish features. An enormous ruby pendant hangs from its neck, and its short arms clutch an oversized staff. The creature squeals: “I am Safdar, the servant and rightful heir of Rak’shaz the Magnificent! You will have to wrestle his ruby from me, you grave robbers! Your ashes will be blown away by desert winds!”

The temperature of this room is high enough to be considered extreme heat (see Dungeon Features, page 186).

The flame is actually *smokeless fire*, an interesting phenomenon of the corresponding Elemental Plane. Magical in nature, this sort of flame doesn’t require fuel and doesn’t give off smoke, burning on its own for an eternity. *Smokeless fire* can’t be doused by normal water, although a *decanter of endless water* or a water elemental can affect it, as well as the *quench* spell. Likewise, it can’t be dispelled, although a *limited wish* or similar magic will remove all *smokeless fire* in a 20-ft. radius. The flames radiate a strong aura of Evocation magic.

Any creature passing through a square with smoke-

less fire takes 1d6 points of damage (no save) and catches on fire (which can be avoided with a DC 15 Reflex save).

Creatures: The throne room that once belonged to Rak’shaz is now inhabited by Safdar, his fire mephit ex-familiar. The creature was initiated in his master’s plans and waited for the event with great anticipation, desiring to acquire a modicum of the Caliph’s power. Soon after Rak’shaz’s death, the mephit donned the Ruby of Rak’shaz, and the intelligent gemstone deemed its owner worthy of further instruction. Guided by Rak’shaz’s psyche, Safdar has developed some sorcerous abilities and is endlessly proud of the fact. It sees the crypt as his personal domain and playground, constantly rearranging it and exploiting its inhabitants. The Ruby has found this sort of behavior acceptable for the time being.

Safdar is constantly protected by Badar and Baqar, two jann brothers enslaved by the Caliph. They are magically *geased* to guard the mephit, and reluctantly comply.

Tactics: Safdar is assumed to be aware of the PCs, as they are highly likely to have revealed their presence by making noise and causing mayhem. Before combat, the mephit casts *shield* (all spell effects are included in the stat block), while his jann bodyguards turn invisible and position themselves in the room’s lower corners. Safdar begins the battle with a *wall of fire* cast from the staff, placing it to cut off the nearest escape route; in the same round, the jann *enlarge* themselves (the change in their statistics is noted above).

In the second round, Safdar flies to a square with smokeless fire and targets the party with his breath weapon. Meanwhile, Badar and Baqar use *change size* to reduce the size of the most physically powerful PCs (this ends their *invisibility*). In the following rounds, the mephit, swearing profusely, vexes the adventurers with *scorching rays*, and the jann attack the closest characters. They maintain this strategy unless it proves to be unsuccessful; then, the outsiders react accordingly. For example, if the party is protected from fire, Safdar eschews *scorching rays* in favor of heavier artillery, like *fireballs* from his necklace or the staff. Overall, the mephit and his servants are crafty opponents, but not infinitely so. Safdar would rather die than outlive his “rule,” and the jann, once freed from their *geas*, use *plane shift* to escape as soon as the mephit is defeated.

Treasure: The brass vases are filled with gems, predominantly bloodstones, jasper and tiny fire opals. The total worth of the gemstones is 2,000 gp.

The Ruby of Rak'shaz Revealed

The Ruby of Rak'shaz is a minor artifact created by the great sorcerer Rak'shaz in an attempt to preserve his psyche on the Material Plane. Physically, it appears as a ruby gemstone the size of a human fist, hanging from a chain of magically treated gold; it is worth 10,000 gp as jewelry alone and hard to break (hardness 15, 70 hp, break DC 35). The gem possesses a malevolent will; the psyche that inhabits the Ruby constantly seeks a worthy candidate to continue Rak'shaz's story of tyranny and magical domination.

Detect magic reveals only a faint aura of transmutation; *analyze dweomer* informs that the magic item grants a +2 enhancement bonus to both Intelligence and Charisma. The Ruby does confer these bonuses, and tries to manipulate events (resorting to its dedicated power if needed) so that it is chosen by an arcane caster. It chooses candidates according to level (the higher the better, of course) and class (sorcerer, wizard, bard, any other class with arcane spells – in descending order of importance). Note that unlike other items, the artifact doesn't cause negative levels if worn by a character of a diverging alignment.

After being worn for 1d4 days, the Ruby reveals its true nature, conversing with the wearer using its telepathy power. The item regularly tries to tempt the arcane caster with promises of power and glory, manifesting some of its powerful abilities if the need arises. If the character follows the Ruby's lead, he drifts towards lawful evil alignment as he becomes haughtier and more ambitious. If he does not, the item uses its Ego to coerce its wearer.

The ultimate objective of the Ruby of Rak'shaz is to recreate Rak'shaz's achievements, so it directs the wearer towards the Caliph's main fields of study. Needless to say, the item can serve as a driving force for an entire campaign – if the PCs are ready to sacrifice such matters as free will or morality.

If the Ruby is broken by mundane means, an incensed ghost of the Caliph (male human Sor20) rises from the shell and attacks the hapless adventurers. A safer method of destroying the artifact is left to the GM's discretion.

Abilities of the Ruby of Rak'shaz:

Ability Scores: Int 19, Wis 10, Cha 19, Ego 22.

Alignment: Lawful evil.

Senses: Darkvision 120 ft., hearing.

Communication: Speech, telepathy.

Languages: Auran, Common, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal.

Lesser Powers: 10 ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (the planes), *detect magic* at will.

Greater Powers: *arcane eye* 1/day, continuous *detect scrying*.

Special Purpose: rise above all arcane spellcasters.

Dedicated Power: *limited wish*.

Faint Transmutation (or strong (all schools) if the gem so desires); CL 20th; Weight 1 lb.

Development: After the PCs take Safdar out, the Ruby of Rak'shaz is theirs for the taking. See Wrapping Up and the sidebar for possible results.

Safdar, Fire Mephit Sor4: CR 6; Small outsider (extraplanar, fire); HD 3d8+4d4+7; hp 30; Init +7; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +1; Atk +6 melee (1d3 plus 1d4 fire, claw); Full Atk +6 melee (1d3 plus 1d4 fire, 2 claws); SA breath weapon, spell-like abilities, *summon mephit*; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, fast healing 2, vulnerability to cold; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Concentration +5, Escape Artist +9, Hide +13, Listen +6, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Move Silently +9, Spot +6, Use Rope +3 (+5 with bindings); Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Ignan.

Breath Weapon (Su): 15-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 1d8 fire, Reflex half DC 13.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/hour—*scorching ray* (DC 16) as the spell cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer; 1/day—*heat metal* (DC 16). Caster level 6th.

Fast Healing (Ex): Safdar heals only if it is touching a flame at least as large as a torch.

Spells (6/6/4, DC 14 + spell level): 0 – *dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 14), *flare* (DC 14), *message*, *prestidigitation*, *touch of fatigue* (+5 melee touch, DC 14); 1st – *color spray* (DC 15), *ray of enfeeblement* (+9 ranged touch), *shield**; 2nd – *scorching ray* (+9 ranged touch). * – precast.

Possessions: *necklace of fireballs type II* (1 6d6 bead, 2 4d6 beads, 2 2d6 beads), *staff of fire* (10 charges), *The Ruby of Rak'shaz* (see the Appendix).

Badar and Baqar, Jann (2): CR 4; Medium outsider (native); HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +6; Spd 20 ft., fly 15 ft. (perfect); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (2d4+4/18-20, masterwork falchion); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (2d4+4/18-20, masterwork falchion); SA *change size*, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., elemental endurance, *plane shift*, resistance to fire 10, telepathy 100 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +11, Concentration +10, Craft (blacksmithing) +11, Craft (bowmaking) +11, Diplomacy +3, Escape Artist +6, Listen +11, Move Silently +6, Ride +11, Sense Motive +11, Spot +11, Use Rope +2 (+4 with bindings); Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility.

Languages: Common, Ignan, Infernal.

Change Size (Sp): Twice per day, a janni can magically change a creature's size. This works just

like an *enlarge person* or *reduce person* spell (the janni chooses when using the ability), except that the ability can work on the janni. A DC 13 Fortitude save negates the effect. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*invisibility* (self only), *speak with animals*. Caster level 12th. Once per day a janni can *create food and water* (caster level 7th) and can use *ethereal jaunt* (caster level 12th) for 1 hour.

Elemental Endurance (Ex): Jann can survive on the Elemental Planes of Air, Earth, Fire, or Water for up to 48 hours. Failure to return to the Material Plane before that time expires causes a janni to take 1 point of damage per additional hour spent on the elemental plane, until it dies or returns to the Material Plane.

Plane Shift (Sp): A janni can enter any of the elemental planes, the Astral Plane, or the Material Plane. This ability transports the janni and up to eight other creatures, provided they all link hands with the genie. It is otherwise similar to the spell of the same name (caster level 13th).

Statistics While Enlarged: Large outsider (native); AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Grp +14; Atk +10 melee (2d6+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (2d6+6/18-20, masterwork falchion); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; Ref +7; Str 18, Dex 13.

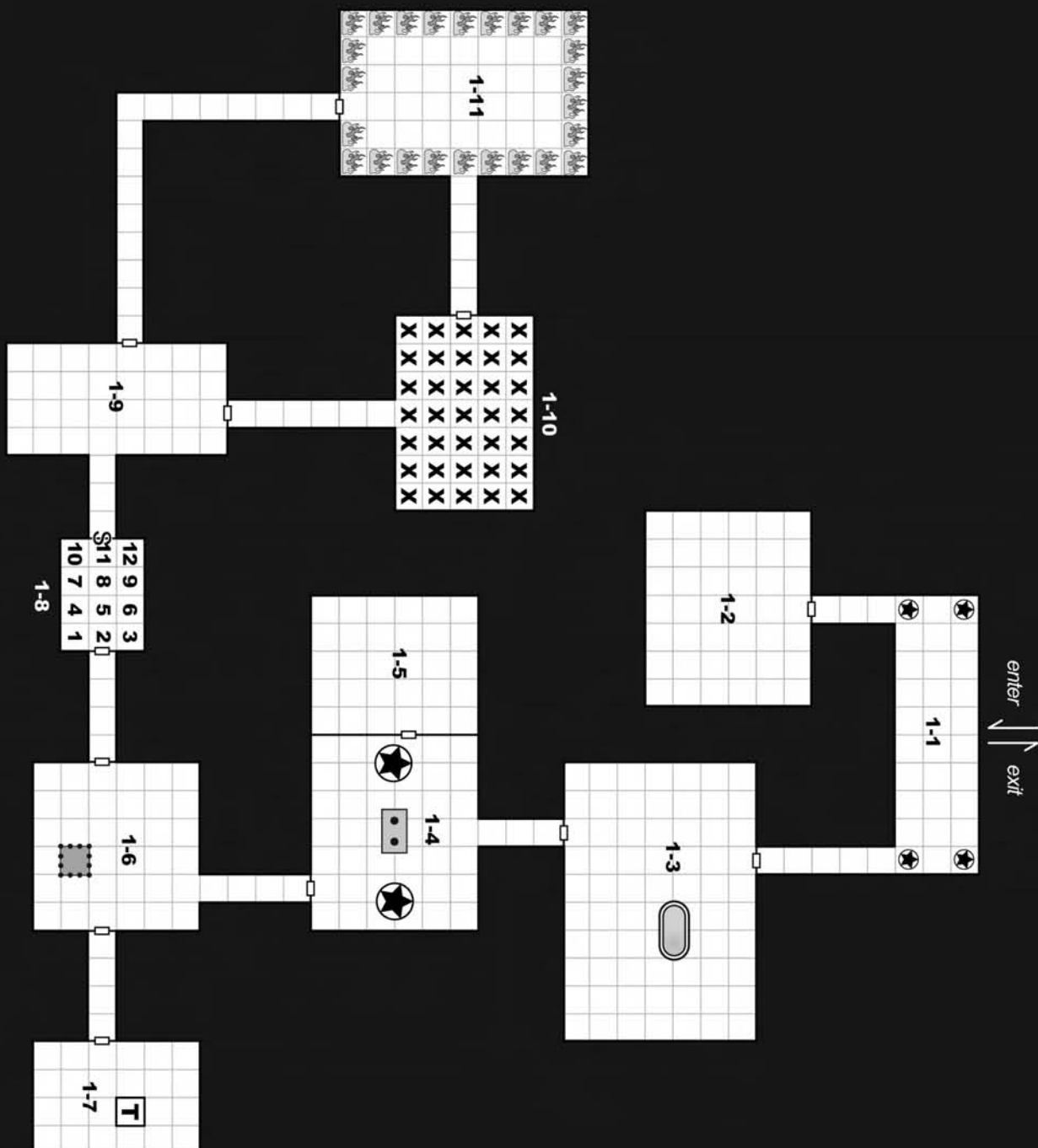
Possessions: +1 *chainmail*, masterwork falchion.

Wrapping Up

The characters succeed in this module by obtaining the Ruby of Rak'shaz and/or achieving associated goals. This adventure offers many opportunities for future quests. PCs may become interested in Rak'shaz's legacy and explore other places associated with the legendary sorcerer; their travels may lead them to other desert-themed adventures, such as *DCC #15: Lost Tomb of the Sphinx Queen* and *DCC #32: Golden Palace of Zahadran*. The genie Fareedoon can become a long-lasting ally of the PCs, and, most evidently, The Ruby of Rak'shaz will add a new dimension to their lives.

The Ruby of Rak'shaz

□ = 5 ft.



Dungeon Crawl Classics

Vale of the Indus

By **B. Matthew Conklin III and Greg Oppedisano**
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-6



Introduction

The Valley of Indus is designed for 4-6 characters of 3-5th level. We recommend about 20 total character levels between the party members. While the characters can be of any character class a good mix of characters is helpful. The module takes place in a hostile jungle environment, so a Druid or Ranger will certainly be of use. The strong warrior type, the sneaky dungeon rogue and the well-versed mage also have their place.

Adventure Summary

The bardic poet Kavi, fearful of reports that the initiate Baldev and his followers have been corrupted by the taint of evil, has arranged to have the heroes undertake a mission of critical importance. First they must travel the Path of the Divine to determine if indeed the Valley of Indus has been corrupted. Each of the four shrines of the Path of the Divine has been tainted by the greater

evil of the Temple of Askesis. Defeating each challenge on the path leads to greater understanding of what has happened at the temple while providing the characters with blessings critical to their success. Upon their arrival the adventures must purge the Temple of Askesis of the evil minions of Initiate Baldev. Initiate Baldev believes he can awaken the Avatar of Askesis, and spread his taint throughout the land.

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), puzzle or information (P), or combat (C). Encounter – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. Names in *italics* are classed NPCs. EL – the encounter level.

| <u>Loc</u> | <u>Pg</u> | <u>Type</u> | <u>Encounter</u> | <u>EL</u> |
|------------|-----------|-------------|--|-----------|
| A | 201 | P/T | Loadstone of Greed | 4 |
| A-1 | 201 | C | <i>Jinguga</i> , very young red dragon | 5 |
| A-2 | 202 | C | 3 Nabjabstab gnolls | 3 |
| A-3 | 203 | C | <i>Atnoseep</i> the imp | 5 |
| B-1 | 204 | C | Fiendish adv. leopards (2) | 5 |
| B-2 | 204 | C | Imp and nilgiri langur (6) | 5 |
| B-3 | 205 | T | <i>Bestow curse</i> trap | 4 |
| B-4 | 205 | T | Poisoned dart trap | 4 |
| B-5 | 206 | T | <i>Sepia snake sigil</i> trap | 4 |
| B-6 | 206 | T | Wyvern arrow trap | 6 |
| B-7 | 206 | C | Abhilasha, half-fiend dryad, Sickened human barbarians (6) | 6 |
| C | 207 | P/T | Dread remembrance | 4 |
| C-1 | 208 | T | Webbing trap | 3 |
| C-2 | 208 | C | Allip | 3 |
| C-3 | 209 | C | Matron Ureiha | 4 |
| C-4 | 209 | C | 4 fiendish Med. spiders | 4 |
| C-5 | 210 | C | 6 skeletons, 2 fiendish spider swarms | 4 |
| C-6 | 211 | C/T | <i>The Shackler</i> | 6 |
| C-7 | 212 | C | Fiendish spider swarm | 1 |
| D | 213 | P/T | The Lure of Mad Rage | 4 |
| D-1 | 212 | C | Bagha warrior, human bbn1 (6), elephants (2) | 6 or 8 |
| D-2 | 214 | C | Otyugh | 4 |
| D-3 | 215 | C | Vikramendra, weretiger, Tiger (2) | 5 or 6 |
| E-1 | 216 | C | Temple monks (6) | 4 or 5 |
| E-2 | 216 | C | Initiate Baldev the Resurrected | 7 |
| E-3 | 217 | C | Temple monks (2) | 2 |
| E-4 | 218 | C | Statue of Soleth, shield guardian | 8 |

Scaling Information

Stronger Parties (7 or more characters, or higher than 4th level): For stronger parties consider adding: 3 Nabjabstab gnolls to area A-2, a fiendish advanced leopard to area B-1, an allip to area C-2, 6 skeletons to area C-5, an otyugh to area D-2, and doubling all the monks in areas E-1 and E-3.

Weaker Parties (4 or fewer characters, or lower than 4th level): The nature of this module does not make it appropriate to scale down to less than 4th level.

Getting the Players Involved

The characters can be drawn into this adventure in a number of ways.

- The characters are traveling the Path of the Divine in the Valley of Indus. They arrive at the first shrine and all is not as it should be. As they continue their journey through the valley they face an increasing evil, the cause of which is slowly revealed to them by the time they enter evil's heart in the Temple of Askesis.
- The characters are asked to travel the Path of the Divine by Initiate Kavi in order to locate his lost followers and determine if the rumour of evil within the sacred Valley of Indus are true.

Wandering Monsters

The Valley of Indus has become a wild jungle teeming with savage animals fighting for their survival amidst fiendish foes. The following is a wandering monsters chart for the areas detailed on the valley map. Alternatively you may decide to just add one of the following encounters automatically as the characters move from one encounter area to the next.

No wandering monsters will be encountered while the characters are in areas A, B, C, D, or E - the detailed encounter areas. While traveling between the detailed encounter areas the following encounter chart can be used to spice things up, or move them along. As a general rule, there is a 20% chance (1-2 on 1d10) of encountering wandering monsters every eight-hour period spent in the Valley of Indus. This chance may be decreased by 10% if the characters make an effort to conceal their camp or the path they have traveled by rolling a successful Survival Check DC 18. Add the party's average character level to the die roll on the following table to determine what monsters are encountered.

1d20 Encounter

- 7-11 Giant bees (20, hostile if provoked)
- 12-16 Advanced apes (1d6+2, hostile)
- 17-19 Advanced Fiendish Leopards (pair, hostile if provoked)

The following statistics blocks are provided for easy reference for the GM.

Advanced Giant Bee: CR 2; Medium vermin; HD 6d8; hp 27; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk sting +4 melee (1d4 plus poison); Full Atk sting +4 melee (1d4 plus poison); SA Poison; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 9

Skills and Feats: Spot +5, Survival +1 (+5 to orient)

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con. A giant bee that success-

fully stings another creature pulls away, leaving its stinger in the creature. The bee then dies.

Advanced Ape: CR 3; Large animal; HD 7d8+17; hp 48; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +5; Grp +14; Atk claws +10 melee (1d6+5); Full Atk 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+5) and bite +4 melee (1d6+2); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA –; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Listen +6, Spot +7; Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claws).

Fiendish Advanced Leopard: CR 4; Medium magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 6d8+12; hp 39; Init +8; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3); Full Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3) and 2 claws +3 melee (1d3+1); SA Improved grab, pounce, rake 1d3+1, smite good; SQ Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, scent, spell resistance 11; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6;

Skills and Feats: Balance +13, Climb +12, Hide +9 (+13 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth), Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6; Alertness,

Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a fiendish leopard must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If a fiendish leopard charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +8 melee, damage 1d3+1.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day fiendish leopard can make a normal melee attack to deal 6 points of extra damage equal to a good foe.

Background Story

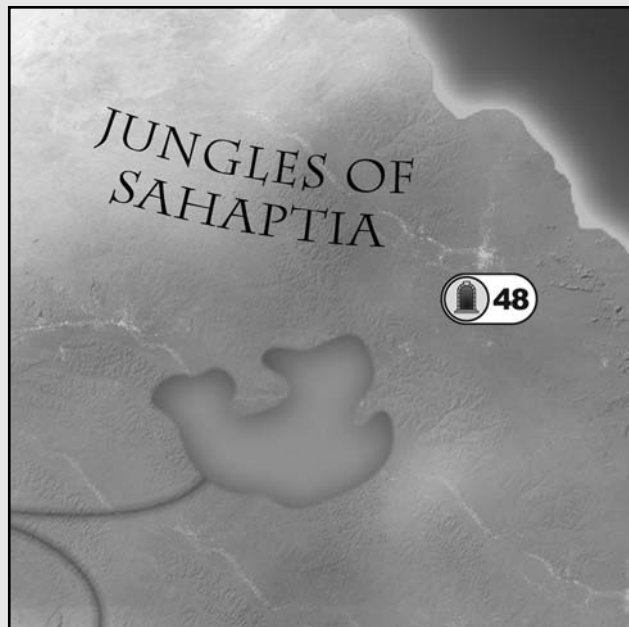
Initiate Baldev of the Temple of Askesis in the Valley of Indus, upon returning through reincarnation from his great journey to the afterlife, broke with the teachings of Initiate Kavi of the Mirror Mountain Temple. Initiate Baldev interpreted text of the Book of Divya which describes purification through fire, to mean that the way to follow in Askesis's path was through purification of the fires of Mount Alburz. Baldev believed that through confronting great evil in the pits of hell he could attain a higher state of enlightenment. Baldev walked the dangerous Final Path deep into the pits of hellfire, knowing he would be safe with the Torque of Askesis about his neck. The Askesi, or followers of the Askesis, believe in finding harmony through practice, training and exercise. They frequently worship Soleth, "the silent death" and god of solitude, and withdraw from society into the life of the Divine in order to achieve the peaceful death.

Initiate Baldev believed Soleth would surely protect his greatest follower from harm – even death – by bringing him back through the miracle of reincarnation. But Angra Mainyu, known as Ahriman, god of destruction and darkness, sent Indra Daeva to tempt Baldev with lies and promises, and lead him from the Path of The Divine to apostasy. When Baldev and his four aspect monks were slain within the burning hell of Mount Alburz, they were immediately reincarnated by the Torques of Askesis (which were consumed by the act) about their necks.

It was then that the unexpected occurred. Because the monks died with evil in their hearts (from the confrontation with the Indra Daeva), they were returned to life as evil reincarnations of various races; Jinguga (a very young red dragon), Abhilasha (a half-fiend dryad), Vikramendra (the weretiger), and The Shackler (a half-fiend ettercap). Baldev and his now-evil followers have taken and corrupted the entire Path of The Divine and the Temple of Askesis and are looking to spread their taint even further once they awaken the avatar of Askesis. Fearful of reports that Initiate Baldev has cast down the pillars of the faith and his followers have been corrupted by the taint of evil, Initiate Kavi has begun searching for those who could cleanse the valley.

DCC World

Lost among the steaming jungles of Sahaptia, the Vale of the Indus is known – if only as a legend – to nearly every order of warrior-monks. The valley and its fabled tests of discipline and virtue comprise a theme that is oft repeated in temples throughout the North. But for those seeking the lost valley, there is little that old codices and sleepy tomes can offer when confronted with the deadly challenges of the Vale.



Area A – Shrine of Charity

Once this pinnacled shrine was a bastion of hope for those who saw it from afar. The Giver (as the shrine keeper was known) and his family were exceptionally generous people who kept a good storehouse of food and goods on hand to give to those in need. But now he and his family are gone; devoured by the young fiery red dragon Jinguaga the Fire-Maker.

Areas of the Map

Area A-1 – Scorched Earth Tactics (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you stands a majestic tile and white-washed stone shrine, built to resemble an elongated pyramid supported by three large blocks, sitting on a slightly elevated stone platform. The land around the temple is a ruin of mud patches, crude furrows, and tortured, flame-blackened earth.

Since the temple fell to the corrupting influence of Initiate Baldev, it has attracted the attention of the greedy young dragon Jinguaga. While scouting the area, Jinguaga noticed a pair of would-be looters struggling with an unusually heavy glowing sack of coins they had taken from the shrine's poor box. The dragon quickly roasted the pair and gobbled them down. Jinguaga then proceeded into the shrine proper to see what other treasures he might find, killing and devouring the Giver and his kin in the process. After claiming all the wealth of the place, however, he found he could not easily transport it because of the curse on the place. Unwilling to let the horde go, he piled it in the center of the shrine, allowing the treasure's glow to be seen through the gaps in the walls. He even added his own stash to the mix as well, hoping it would attract more fortune hunters while he observed from a nearby rocky hillside (about 2 miles away). When Jinguaga notices creatures (or light sources) moving in close proximity of the shrine he swoops in to investigate, hoping to catch creatures bearing treasure overburdened as they are leaving. The bait has worked so well that the dragon has added a paunch to his normally sleek, cat-like build.

Development: It only takes Jinguaga about 18 rounds to reach the shrine from his perch if he flies flat-out the whole way (a run action, on the 18th round though he would have to make a DC 10 Constitution check or cease taking run actions and be unable to do so again for a full minute). His keen senses allow him to discern characters at that distance without a check unless the characters are trying to hide, and approaching from the west using

Corrupting Aura: Lodestone of Greed (CR 4)

While within a mile of the shrine, characters with expensive (anything worth more than 250 gp, coins or gems stones kept within a single container (i.e. a small sack or backpack) are counted as one item for determining their worth) or magical items will notice that those items glow with a wavering green light like fire (those that already glowed glow a bit more by comparison). During the day the aura of light is hard to notice, but at night it is as bright as any standard torch.

Furthermore, if a creature enters the temple with such an item and then tries to leave, its weight increases. Every ten feet beyond the stairs of the temple that such an item is taken, out to a radius of 60 feet, its weight increases by 100%. For example, a character wearing expensive full plate (50 lbs.) walks into the temple and then attempts to walk away. At ten feet from the temple his armor suddenly weighs 100 lbs. At 20-feet the armor weighs 150 lbs and so on until he gets away from the effect (60-feet away from the shrine). Were the effected to items returned to the shrine their weight is likewise restored in the same manner. Items inside or within 10 feet of the shrine do not weigh anymore than they usually do. Once a character brings an item valued at 250 gp or more the item reacts this way until such time as corrupting aura is lifted.

To lift the curse of the corrupting aura one must make an offering to the shrine. A character or group of characters must donate an item or items worth a total of 250 gp or more to the statue set in the center of the shrine. The items can be placed in the statue's hands or placed at its feet with the intent to give the item(s) to the patron spirit of the temple. The item(s) in question must rightfully belong to the characters (the dragon's horde does not count until after the dragon is defeated or driven away). The donated items disappear in a flash of light and are lost forever; however the corrupting aura is undone. If the characters run off the imp (or have already done so) they receive an additional boon. The necklace around the statue's neck disappears, and becomes a real necklace of gold, set with a large, rough-cut, purple quartz that gives off a faint glow. The necklace appears in place of the character's offering.

the shrine's tall steeple as cover (to do that they would probably have to know where the dragon is, in which case a DC 20 Hide check successfully eludes the dragon's casual notice). The sound of battle travels up to the dragon's ears quite clearly and brings him to investigate.

The greedy dragon is so stuffed, he is willing to let eloquent, or clever meals go, provided they leave their treasure (anything that glows) behind. Creatures who know the dragon's name (bardic lore or Knowledge (arcana) DC 18) and can flatteringly recount his horrible exploits (Perform (oration, or song) DC 18), move him enough to allow the characters to pass this one time so long as they do not take anything from the temple that bears his or the gnolls' scent (all the treasure in the shrine). This treasure he considers his, and treats creatures that take it as thieves. He attacks such thieves immediately, harrying them for miles if necessary to retrieve what he feels is his.

Tactics: Jinguga fights to the death to protect his treasure. If sorely pressed by characters that seem disinterested in his belongings, he flees to rest up and plan his revenge. If the shrine is purified, the dragon may attempt to cut and run, carrying what treasure it can back into the mountains.

Jinguga the Fire-Keeper, male very young red dragon: CR 5; Large dragon (fire); HD 10d12+30; hp 95; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +10; Grp +19; Atk bite +14 melee (2d6+5); Full Atk bite +14 melee (2d6+5), and 2 claws +12 melee (1d8+2) and 2 wings +12 melee (1d6+2) and tail +12 melee (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with bite); SA Breath weapon; SQ Blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., immunity to fire, *sleep*, and paralysis, vulnerability to cold; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +10, Bluff +11, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +1 (+3 acting), Intimidate +12, Jump +18, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks); Alertness, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

SA – Breath Weapon (Su): 40-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 4d10 fire, Reflex DC 18 half.

Area A-2 – Aspect of Charity (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

Under the high-pinnacled roof sits a small horde of treasures, wreathed in green fire-light, haphazardly piled at the foot of a centrally placed stone statue that depicts a content-looking woman dressed in a toga and wearing a



large pendant. Her six arms are extended outward with their palms up. The room shows signs of recent battle, including three humanoid corpses, bloodstains, broken bits of armor, and broken floor and wall tiles.

A raiding party of gnolls from the Nabjabstab clan came upon the shrine recently and succumbed to its corrupting aura. The corpses are those of three gnolls who died during a heated debate over ownership of the treasure. Three of their fellows lurk nearby. These three are also maddened with greed and plan on killing one another at the most convenient opportunity, but are more than willing to work with one another to slay intruders (who more than likely have expensive treasures themselves).

Treasure: Piled on the floor near the foot of the central statue are the following items (most of the coins are kept in crude hemp sacks): 20,134 cp, 1,439 sp, 432 gp, 3 bloodstones worth 50 gp each, a pair of opal earrings (300 gp each), an ivory lion statuette (30 gp), a large rough cut garnet (200 gp), a gold arm band (150 gp), and a silver harp (45 gp).

Nabjabstab Clan raiders, male and female gnolls (3): CR 1; Medium humanoid (gnoll); HD 2d8+2; hp 11, 9, 9; Init +0; AC 16* touch 10, flat-footed 16*; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk battleaxe +3 melee (1d8+2/x3) or shortbow +1 ranged

(1d6/x3); SA –; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Listen +2, Spot +3; Power Attack.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, heavy steel shield, battleaxe, shortbow, 10 arrows, a small pouch or two containing a total of 2d12 x 10 gp in loose gemstones.

* The toughest gnoll has a +1 *heavy steel shield*, giving it an AC of 17/10/17.

Area A-3 – Pantry House for the Poor (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The horrible smell of rotten fruit, bread and vegetables emanates from just beyond a slightly ajar door. The scent is made even more overpowering by the sight of the spoiled produce lining (and in some cases dripping off) the wooden shelves that take up most of the room beyond.

At one time this room was used to store extra food and grain for the poor and needy, but in the weeks since Initiate Baldev became an apostate and the land became cursed, the food has been left to rot. Hidden among the filth is Atnoseep, Scion of Greed.

Tactics: Atnoseep is more interested in treasure than combat, but will play cat and mouse with the party using hit and run tactics. He will use his alternate form and spell-like abilities to full advantage. When first encountered, he is in one of his two alternate forms.

Atnoseep, advanced, elite imp: CR 5; Tiny outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +5; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp –1; Atk/Full Atk sting +13 melee (1d4+1 plus poison); Space/Reach

2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA Poison, spell-like abilities; SQ Alternate form (bat or boar), damage reduction 5/good or silver, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity poison, resistance to fire 5; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +13, Gather Information +7, Hide +21, Knowledge (local) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +13, Search +8, Spellcraft +8, Spot +8, Survival +8 (+10 following tracks); Ability Focus (poison), Flyby Attack, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day – *suggestion* (DC 18). Caster level 6th. Once per week Atnoseep can use *commune* to ask six questions. The ability otherwise works as the spell (caster level 12th).

SQ – Alternate Form (Su): Atnoseep can assume the form of a bat or boar as a standard action. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell (caster level 12th), except that Atnoseep does not regain hit points for changing form.

Area A-4 – Giver's Hovel: Read or paraphrase the following:

The door to this room sits battered and is hanging by one hinge as if a bear or other large animal had forced its way in. The room beyond is in even worse condition; having been swept by what must have been a terrible fire. The charred remains of wooden furniture, utensils, a child's doll and other personal effects lie scattered about the chamber's floor.

The Giver and his family fled here to their home at the approach of the dragon, but the wooden door was not enough to stand against Jinguga's power.

New Magic Item: The Devadasis

Also known as “Servants of God,” this is a magical carving that will grant the “*blessing of the Devadasis*” once per month to those who enter the shrine when placed on a pedestal of heartwood within a banyan tree. The “*blessing of Devadasis*” does not take immediate effect – it may be triggered by the blessed (at will) at any time in the next 30 days. The blessing lasts one hour and acts for all intents and purposes as a *greater heroism* spell: the creature gains a +4 morale bonus on attack rolls, saves, and skill checks, immunity to fear effects, and +10 temporary hit points.

The Shards of the Devadasis (CR 4) are the 4 sundered pieces of “*the Devadasis*.” Carried separately (taking the necklace spot) the shards act as an *amulet of health*, granting the wearer an enhancement bonus of +2 to Constitution.

To remake the original sculpture, simply press the broken shards together. Remaking the shards into the Devadasis and restoring the shrine will earn the adventurers an EL 4 experience award.

Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *bear's endurance*; Price 4,000 gp (+2).

Disappointed with pickings around the rest of the temple, the dragon stormed the chamber in search of more treasure, which was not to be found.

Area A-5 – Store House for the Poor: This storage area contains a number of mundane nonfood items (each valued at 5gp or less value) such as torches, clothing, tents, tools, containers, soap etc... The selfish dragon counts these items as part of his horde and protects them every bit as fiercely as he does the treasure in area A-2.

Treasure: Jinguga, Atnoseep, bandits and gnolls have all rifled through the area, leaving it a disorganized mess. Hidden in a pile of cast off rope and canvas is a belt pouch containing five small vials of antitoxin (Search DC 25).

Area B – The Shrine of Lust

The Shrine of Lust is home to Abhilasha, a half-fiend Dryad perversion of nature, who has adopted the banyan tree as her bound tree. Abhilasha's wild empathy has called the animals of the jungle to serve her and they have become as corrupted as the shrine. Abhilasha's lustful nature has drawn some of the barbarians of the jungle to her revels and they long for her approval and attentions.

The shrine of Lust was once the shrine of Love. A place where people worshiped devotion to others through dance, the shrine housed the magical carving known as "*The Devadasis*." Abhilasha sundered the statue into four and placed each piece in one of the four fonts in the surrounding tree shrines (B-3 through B-6). The sundering of the statue has led to the perversion of the shrine from love to lust and begun the process of poisoning the entire shrine. Remaking the statue and cleansing the shrine is explained in area B-7.

Areas of the Map

Area B-1 – A Growl in the Trees (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The path of enlightenment winds through dense jungle before opening to reveal a towering shrine carved from the twisty trunk of a truly stately banyan tree. Aerial roots and hanging branches form a dark canopy, from which come the sweet smell of flowers and the gentle buzz of hungry bees. Stairs have been made from the densely packed earth leading up to the delicately carved entrance at the base of the tree.

Closer examination will reveal that there are actually five trees present here – a very large and old central banyan and four smaller trees planted equidistance from the center. The central banyan tree is

massively thick – a full 60 feet across and its top branches stretch a hundred feet into the air. The surrounding banyan trees are 20 feet across and their upper canopies entwine with the branches of the central tree.

There is a lot of lush wildlife in the branches of the trees, and none more dangerous than Abhilasha's pair of fiendishly corrupted leopards.

Tactics: The leopards wait patiently, hiding in the canopy of the central tree (+4 circumstance bonus to hide) until the characters approach the entrance. Then they pounce down on their targets hoping to achieve surprise.

Fiendish Advanced Leopard (2): CR 4; Medium magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 6d8+12; hp 39 each; Init +8; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3); Full Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3) and 2 claws +3 melee (1d3+1); SA Improved grab, pounce, rake 1d3+1, smite good; SQ Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, scent, spell resistance 11; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 6;

Skills and Feats: Balance +13, Climb +12, Hide +9 (+13 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth), Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a fiendish leopard must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If a fiendish leopard charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +8 melee, damage 1d3+1.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day fiendish leopard can make a normal melee attack to deal 6 points of extra damage equal to a good foe.

Area B-2 – Some Monkeys are just Monkeys and Some Monkeys are Imps (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The raised platform beneath the canopy of the trees is shrouded in the oppressive darkness of the dense jungle. A quick look reveals that the platform leads to five doors, one door enters into the massive central tree and the other four doors are in the trunks of the smaller adjoining trees. The chattering of tree monkeys is getting louder.

The canopy of the trees above the raised platform is home to a pack of nilgiri langur monkeys led by imps in alternate forms (Nilgiri Langur monkey form to be exact). The Imp and his monkey pack will begin harassing the adventures as soon as they begin exploring the raised platform.

Tactics: Nilgiri langur prefer to attack in groups – working together to achieve the +2 bonus for flanking whenever possible. If wounded, the langur will always flee to the upper canopy of the trees above and not return. The imp will remain in monkey form – this will not affect his attacks or special abilities in any way. The imp is intelligent and will begin the combat invisible and attempt to catch a lightly armored character flat footed with his first poisonous tail sting, then will use his *suggestion* to recommend that a fighter type run back up the path and get help (remember a suggestion can last up to one hour).

Nilgiri Langur (6): Medium animal; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11, Base Atk +0; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk bite +2 melee (1d6+3); SA –; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Listen +5, Spot +5; Alertness

Nilgiri langur are powerful and aggressive primates that prefer to live in trees. They will travel through open spaces but always return to foliage to find safe places to rest, eat and sleep. A typical nilgiri langur is the size of a medium dog.

Skills: Nilgiri langur have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Imp: Tiny outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 3d8; hp 13; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +3; Grp –5; Atk/Full Atk sting +8 melee (1d4 plus poison); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA Poison, spell-like abilities; SQ Alternate form, damage reduction 5/good or silver, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to poison, resistance to fire 5; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14;

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +8, Hide +17, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spellcraft +8, Spot +7, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks); Dodge, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage 1d4 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *invisibility* (self only); 1/day—*suggestion* (DC 15). Caster level 6th. Once per week an imp can use *commune* to ask six questions. The ability

otherwise works as the spell (caster level 12th).

SQ – Alternate Form (Su): An imp can assume other forms at will as a standard action. This ability functions as a *polymorph* spell cast on itself (caster level 12th), except that an imp does not regain hit points for changing form, and an individual imp can assume only one or two forms no larger than Medium. Common forms include monstrous spider, raven, rat, and boar.

Possessions: *Ring of protection* +2

Area B-3 – Shrine of Familial Love (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The interior trunk of this tree is intricately carved with imagery of families. There are dozens of common familiar scenes of families engaging in everyday acts of caring and love. In one corner a man and woman cradle a baby, in another a father shows his child how to carve wood, in a nook there are grand parents receiving gifts from grand children. In the center of the shrine is a column with a font carved from the heartwood of the tree. The grain of the wood, spreading from the font, has been transformed by an ugly red stain that is spreading up the heartwood and into the rest of the tree.

The font in the heartwood of the shrine of love has been corrupted by a piece of “*The Devadasis*” (see sidebar) that has been placed in the red stained water of the heartwood font. The *shard of Devadasis* appears as a small statue of a woman dancing that is obviously broken from a larger piece. The heartwood font and the stained water are trapped.

Bestow curse trap: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger (detect chaos); automatic reset; spell effect (bestow curse, 5th-level cleric, DC 14 Will save negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. Cost: 8,000 gp, 640 XP.

Area B-4 – Shrine of Loyalty (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The interior trunk of this tree is intricately carved with imagery of friendship. In the center of the shrine is a column with a font carved from the heartwood of the tree. The grain of the wood, spreading from the font, has been transformed by an ugly blue stain that is spreading up the heartwood and into the rest of the tree.

The font in the heartwood of the shrine of loyalty has been corrupted by a piece of “*The Devadasis*” (see sidebar) that has been placed in the blue stained water of the heartwood font. The *shard of Devadasis* appears as a small statue of a woman

dancing that is obviously broken from a larger piece. The heartwood font and the stained water are trapped.

Poisoned dart trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +15 ranged (1d4+4 plus poison, dart); multiple targets (1 dart per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); poison (Small monstrous centipede poison, DC 10 Fortitude save resists, 1d2 Dex/1d2 Dex); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 22. Market Price: 12,090 gp.

Area B-5 – Shrine of Devotion (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The interior trunk of this tree is intricately carved with imagery of worship. There are dozens of common familiar scenes of families engaging in everyday acts of worship. In one corner a man is prostrate before an idol, in another a woman brings food to sacrifice at the site of her parents' burial, another shows a child serving beside an altar. In the center of the shrine is a column with a font carved from the heartwood of the tree. The grain of the wood, spreading from the font, has been transformed by an ugly yellow stain that is spreading up the heartwood and into the rest of the tree.

The font in the heartwood of the shrine of love has been corrupted by a piece of “*The Devadasis*” (see sidebar) that has been placed in the yellow stained water of the heartwood font. The *shard of Devadasis* appears as a small statue of a woman dancing that is obviously broken from a larger piece. The heartwood font and the stained water are trapped.

Sepia snake sigil trap: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (sepia snake sigil, 5th-level wizard, DC 14 Reflex save negates); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28. Cost: 650 gp to hire NPC spellcaster.

Area B-6 – Shrine of Romantic Love (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

The interior trunk of this tree is intricately carved with imagery of romance. There are dozens of common familiar scenes of people engaging in everyday acts of romantic love. In one nook a man woos his lover, in another an elderly woman weeps alone. In the center of the shrine is a column with a font carved from the heartwood of the tree. The grain of the wood, spreading from the font, has been transformed by an ugly black stain that is spreading up the heartwood and into the rest of the tree.

The font in the heartwood of the shrine of love has

been corrupted by a piece of “*The Devadasis*” (see sidebar) that has been placed in the black stained water of the heartwood font. The *shard of Devadasis* appears as a small statue of a woman dancing that is obviously broken from a larger piece. The heartwood font and the stained water are trapped.

Wyvern arrow trap: CR 6; mechanical; proximity trigger; manual reset; Atk +14 ranged (1d8 plus poison, arrow); poison (wyvern poison, DC 17 Fortitude save resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 16. Market Price: 17,400 gp.

Area B-7 – Abhilasha's Lair (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

The interior of the massive banyan tree is a very disturbing scene of debauchery and exhausted revelry. Bodies lay entwined about the floor, in various stages of consciousness; the strong smell of alcohol is in the air and puddles of spilt spirits soak into the floor. Slouched in a pedestal carved from the heartwood of the mighty banyan is a gorgeous woman with the delicate features of an elf, oddly her skin has the texture of fine bark and leafy green leaves form a tangled canopy of hair atop her head.

The woman on the throne is Abhilasha, a half-fiend dryad. Drunken revelers, many of whom are not able to rise and defend her, surround her. Abhilasha treats all who enter her home as a threat to herself and her adopted banyan tree and immediately attacks.

The pedestal is the original home of *the Devadasis*. Simply simply pressing the four parts together can remake the statue. The shrine can be cleansed and returned to its original state by defeating all of the minions at the shrine and remaking the statue and returning it to the pedestal.

Ad Hoc Experience Bonus: Remaking the shards into *the Devadasis* and restoring the shrine will earn the adventurers an EL 4 experience award.

Tactics: Abhilasha uses *charm person* or *suggestion*, attempting to gain control of the attacker who could help the most against the rest, likely fighter types first. Treat Abhilasha's drunken and tired barbarian allies as Sickened (they take a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks)

Sickened Human Bbn1 (6): CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d12+1; hp 13 each; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flatfooted 10; Base Atk +1, Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk masterwork greatclub

+3 melee (1d10+1); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Fast movement, illiteracy; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Intimidate +1, Jump +8, Listen +3, Survival +3; Dodge, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

SA – Rage (Ex): Once per day, these barbarians can enter a state of fierce rage that last for 6 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as they rage: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 8; hp 15; Atk masterwork greatclub +5 melee (1d10+4); SV Fort +3, Will +1; Str 19, Con 17; Climb +6, Jump +8. At the end of their rage, these barbarians are fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: Masterwork greatclub.

Abhilasha, half-fiend dryad: CR 4; Medium outsider (augmented fey, native); HD 4d6+4; hp 18; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 20; touch 16, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk claw +8 melee (1d4+2) or dagger +8 melee (1d4+2/19–20) or masterwork longbow +9 ranged (1d8/x3); Full Atk 2 claws +8 melee (1d4+2) and bite +3 melee (1d6+1) or dagger +8 melee (1d4+2/19–20) and bite +3 melee (1d6+1) or masterwork longbow +7 ranged (1d8/x3); SA Smite good, spell-like abilities; SQ Damage reduction 5/cold iron or magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 14, tree dependent, wild empathy +8; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 23, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 20

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +6, Escape Artist +13, Handle Animal +12, Hide +13,

Knowledge (nature) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Ride +15, Spot +9, Survival +9 (+11 in aboveground natural environments), Use Rope +7 (+9 with bindings); Great Fortitude, Weapon Finesse.

SA – Smite Good (Su): Once per day Abhilasha can make a normal melee attack to deal 4 points of extra damage to a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *darkness*, *entangle* (DC 13), *speak with plants*, *tree shape*; 3/day – *charm person* (DC 13), *deep slumber* (DC 15), *tree stride*; 1/day – *desecrate*, *suggestion* (DC 15). Caster level 6th.

SQ – Tree Dependent (Su): Abhilasha is mystically bound to a single, enormous oak tree and must never stray more than 300 yards from it. If she does, she become ill and dies within 4d6 hours. Abhilasha's oak does not radiate magic.

Wild Empathy (Ex): This power works like the druid's wild empathy class feature, except that Abhilasha has a +8 racial bonus on the check.

Possessions: Dagger, masterwork longbow, 20 arrows.

Treasure: Ceremonial electrum dagger with a star ruby in the pommel (700 gp); silver ewer (70 gp); silver comb with moonstones (500 gp); Scroll: *hide from animals*, *bull's strength* (x3), *status* (x3), *tree shape* (x3), *inflict light wounds* (x1); 2,000 sp.

Corrupting Aura: Dread Remembrance (CR 4)

Non-fiendish creatures within the confines of the shrine cannot let go of their past. The Shrine is treated as if it is under the effects of a *desecrate* spell (caster level 10). To the PCs, each room or chamber seems to hold a fragment of a painful memory. Each time the characters enter a new map area have them make a DC 15 Will save. Those that fail notice something in the area that reminds them of some sad episode in the past. Characters who fail the roll by five or more become stunned for one round at an inopportune time while in the chamber. These visions or hallucinations can take several forms. Perhaps the shadows fall across Matron Ureiha's face in such a way that she reminds the viewer of their dead mother, perhaps the gray pilgrim looks a bit like that innocent bystander that the PC couldn't save, or an item found in the secret chamber stirs up memories of a more innocent time. The stimuli likewise can come in many forms and the DM is encouraged to use as many senses as possible in their descriptions; scent in particular can be very evocative.

While the corrupting aura is in effect, undead in the area receive a +4 profane bonus to resist turn attempts and gain the rejuvenation ability like a ghost, reforming in 2d4 days if they are destroyed. The corruption is linked to the Shackler who himself lives in the past, and knows when a character is experiencing a remembrance. Once the Shackler is driven off or otherwise eliminated, the curse is lifted. Merely slaying him is not enough to lift the curse. To be fully rid of the curse, the slain Shackler would need to given proper funeral rights with all of the surviving characters involved in his death in attendance and playing a role in the proceedings. Characters can come to this conclusion on a successful DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check. If the characters rescue Matron Ureiha, she comes up with the same answer once her Wisdom score returns to 10 or better. Once the curse is lifted the restless undead return to their slumber.

Area C – Shrine of the Divine Wheel

The shrine of the Divine Wheel is both an ancient tomb and a shrine to the principle that nothing lasts forever and that as time moves forward everything must pass in order so that it might be reborn again in some new form at some later date. To hold on to something, even something that is deeply treasured, too firmly is to invite stagnation, corruption and eventually ruination. One must always be willing to change as the world does around them even though it might be painful.

In its corrupted state, the shrine is inhabited by the spirits of those dead souls who desperately cling to their current incarnation. By doing so they do not realize the evil they are perpetrating on their loved ones. Also in attendance is the Shackler. The Shackler is the product of a union between one of the forest's many ettercaps and a chain devil. The lawful nature of this creature means it cannot nor will not accept change of any sort and hordes a great number of belongings and souvenirs in the thick webs that hang from him like chains. The angry undead do not attack the Shackler because the creature has promised to help find a way to restore them.

The floors of the cave shrine are considered rough-hewn, having only been smoothed down by the uncounted footsteps of visitors over the last eight centuries. A DC 10 balance check is required to run or charge across the uneven floor. Failure means the character can still act but can't run or charge in this round.

Areas of the Map

Area C-1 – Entrance to the Catacombs (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The path ends abruptly to the base of an overhanging cliff, just past a statue depicting a beautiful, smiling woman holding a snake bent in the form of a circle that is, eating its own tail.

The Shrine of the Divine Wheel was originally constructed during a time of great turmoil and so it was built as a hidden temple for the faithful. In recent times, the secret passage that guarded its entrance has remained open, but with the coming of Initiate Baldev, the Shackler (area D-6) has come to roost here. The Shackler has locked the door and trapped it with his own chain-like webbing.

Secret Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break 28; Search 20.

Characters tampering with the secret door have a chance of triggering this trap. It drops a net of web-

bing down on the character in front of the door, and causes a gong to sound, which draws the attention of the allip in area D-2. The allip begins to babble aloud on the following round. The sound of its cries can be heard outside. On their next action they float through the door and attack. The net is fixed to the cliff side keeping the netted character stuck in proximity to the door until they can escape.

Webbing Trap: CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; Atk +4 melee touch (entangle, web netting affixed to overhang) and warning bell; manual reset; Search 20; Disable Device 18. Web Net: hp 5; Escape Artist 20; Burst DC 25.

Area C-2 – Cave of Welcome (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The smooth walls of this cave attest to its long use. Hundreds of candles line alcoves set in the uneven walls only a few of which are lit.

This room served as an entrance to the shrine. A hidden bolt hole lies to the north of the cave (Search DC 20), while the passage that winds deeper into the complex rises as it nears area C-4.

Here in the dim light an allip resembling a gray-cloaked pilgrim mutters sadly to itself in the far corner. When approached, the faceless apparition screams and babbles as if in pain. It slaps at the PCs with its smoky, insubstantial hands as it tries to drive off the living; brutal reminders of the life it left behind.

Muttering Pilgrim, allip: CR 3; Medium undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk incorporeal touch +3 melee (1d4 Wisdom drain); SA Babble, madness, Wisdom drain; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, +2 turn resistance, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4; Str –, Dex 12, Con –, Wis 11, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +7, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks); Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

SA – Babble (Su): An allip constantly mutters and whines to itself, creating a hypnotic effect. All sane creatures within 60 feet of the allip must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be affected as though by a hypnotism spell for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion effect. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same allip's babble for 24 hours.

Madness (Su): Anyone targeting an allip with a thought detection, mind control, or telepathic ability makes direct contact with its tortured mind and takes 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

Wisdom Drain (Su): An allip causes 1d4 points of Wisdom drain each time it hits with its of Wisdom drain each time it hits with its incorporeal touch attack. On each such successful attack, it gains 5 temporary hit points.

Area C-3 – The Secret Chamber (EL 4): The secret chamber is used to store provisions for the shrine. When the Shackler arrived, Matron Ureiha, the priestess of the shrine, came here to don her mostly ceremonial armor to confront the evil. But before she could leave, the restless dead within the shrine awoke. One of the creatures, the allip of the gray pilgrim, assaulted her and left her maddened. Now in a state of shock and tormented nightly by the allip, Matron Ureiha attacks the first thing through the secret door imagining it to be some monstrous horror.

Secret Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break 28; Search 20.

Matron Ureiha has been trapped here for days by the allip in the entrance chamber. She is half deranged and attacks any creature save the gray pilgrim on sight.

Tactics: If she hears someone tampering with the lock, Ureiha positions herself near the entranceway and readies an action to swing her morningstar at the first person or creature she sees. She is terrified by the allip and cowers if it is still active (or she thinks it is still active). Otherwise she attempts to flee the shrine, attacking anyone in her way like a cornered animal. Ureiha does not take the time to listen to any diplomatic overtures made by the PCs unless she is somehow forced to listen. If somehow calmed down and healed of her Wisdom drain, her attitude shifts immediately from hostile to neutral, and she can tell the characters about the happenings in the shrine.

Treasure: The storage area is filled with barrels of rainwater, grain, bread, and fruit - some of which Matron Ureiha has been subsisting on. Among the food stocks one can find some expensive spices stored in three sealed urns (150 gp), a dozen bottles of fine local wine (10 gp), 2 vials of antitoxin, 5 empty waterskins, a spool of wicks, a common lamp, and 2 vials of lantern oil.

Ad Hoc Experience: Because the Matron does not have access to her spells she is treated as one CR lower than her level would suggest.

Matron Ureiha, female human Clr5: CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d8+10; hp 36; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk masterwork morn-

ingstar +6 melee (1d8+1) or light crossbow +2 ranged (1d8/19-20); SA Turn undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+6); SQ Spontaneous casting (*cure* spells); AL NG (currently acts CN); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 2 (down from 16), Cha 12.

Skills and Feat: Concentration +10, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +4; Brew Potion, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Spells Prepared (0; Domains: Healing, Protection): Cannot currently cast spells.

Possessions: Masterwork full plate, +1 *heavy steel shield*, masterwork morningstar, light crossbow, 20 bolts, 2 scrolls of *cure light wounds* (CL 1), wooden holy symbol.

Area C-4 – The Ghost Walk (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The path ahead rises as it nears what looks to be a sharp turn.

The path here slopes upward until it reaches the apex of the hairpin turn, and then starts to descend again. The area is thick with devil spiders, vicious spirit creatures that resemble common (Fine) red spiders. For the most part they are harmless to anything as large as the characters, although some specimens are much larger and more aggressive.

Lurking in the shadowy nooks of the uneven ceiling just past the turn is a quartet of fiendish spiders; their backs patterned to look like the faces of angry red devils.

Tactics: The spiders attempt to remain hidden until the characters pass. They will follow them, attacking from behind at an opportune time. If spotted, they attack from the ceiling or high on the walls gaining a +1 bonus to hit for higher ground. Generally on the first round, two of spiders throw their webs while the others attempt to poison netted targets.

Devil Spiders, fiendish medium monstrous spiders (4): CR 1; Medium magical beast (augmented vermin, extraplanar); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk bite +4 melee (1d6 plus poison); SA Poison, smite good, web 8/day; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, spell resistance 7, tremorsense 60 ft, vermin traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +7 (+11 in webs), Move Silently +8 (+12 in webs), Spot +4; Weapon Finesse.

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 12, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Strength.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day a fiendish monstrous spider can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra 2 points of damage against a good foe.

Web (Ex): This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size category larger than the spider. An entangled creature can escape with a successful DC 12 Escape Artist check or burst it with a DC 16 Strength check.

Area C-5 – The Cramped Catacombs (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

Before you is a narrow corridor draped in cobwebs that billow outward in the chill draft.

The corridor is carved in rough-hewn stone like the rest of the shrine, but the walls here are not as smooth as they are in other places. The walls of the corridor are only set 2-1/2-feet apart, so the ways is cramped. Set into the walls at irregular intervals and at differing heights are dozens of recessed alcoves containing the bones of important clergy and laity.

The small chamber to the north of the catacombs is lined with shelves containing spare candles and cinnamon scented incense.

The spirits of six of the hundreds of dead stored here have not passed into the next life, but lingered in their bones, hoping to win back the life that was lost to them. That urge is now all-consuming and has stripped them of whatever personality or humanity they possessed. With the coming of the Initiate Baldev's corrupting influence and the Shackler (see area 24), these spirits have gained enough power to raise and walk as animated undead. For now they conserve their energy waiting for their chance to rise completely. Nesting among them is a swarm of diminutive (hand-sized), monstrous red spiders like the ones encountered in area D-4. Instead of a trio they number in the hundreds and attack as a swarm.

Tactics: The skeletons look just like any other pile of bones in the niches cut into the stone walls. They wait until the party is moving past them before reaching out and grabbing an arm or a leg or slashing with both claws. The skeletons attempt to slow up or grapple as many characters as they can, in the process stirring up the spider swarm lurking in the alcoves. The agitated fiendish spiders attack any living thing they can get to, swarming through the skeletons to do so.

Devil Spider Swarm, fiendish spider swarm (2): CR 1; Diminutive magical beast (augmented vermin, extraplanar, swarm); HD 2d8; hp 9 each; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 17, flat-



footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk swarm (1d6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA Distraction, poison, smite good; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, spell resistance 7, swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft., vermin traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 1, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Listen +4, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse.

SA – Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with a spider swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Strength.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day a fiendish spider swarm can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra 2 points of damage against a good foe.

Web-shrouded skeletons (6): CR 1/3; Medium undead; HD 1d12; hp 7 each; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp +1; Atk claw +1 melee (1d4+1); Full Atk 2 claws +1 melee (1d4+1); SQ Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft. immunity to cold, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 13, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Improved Initiative.

Area C-6 – The Shrine (EL 6+): Read or paraphrase the following:

The cave room beyond is rung with unlit sconces. The smell of dry, desiccated death hangs in the air. A statue resembling the one in front of the shrine entrance stands in the north-east.

The Shackler resembles a horrible cross of spider and man, with ugly, bloated bruise-colored skin, sinewy arms, and wasp-like wings that drone when he is aloft. He wears a long veil made of web sheets and has thick knots of the stuff tied around his arms, waist and gut, the strands of which hang down to form a macabre kilt. Sewn into this ghastly attire are the souvenirs of his long life and the husks of past meals, including his own ettercap mother. The entire assemblage should hamper movement, but the Shackler seems hardly encumbered at all.

Tactics: The Shackler is quite obviously insane. He talks to the mummified husks in his webbing as if they were still alive and hates change more than anything; a trait that has endeared him to the restless dead within the shrine.

If a fight breaks out, the Shackler uses his black tentacles and darkness to try and hamper most of the party while he concentrates on one or two foes. In addition, the floor is coated in thin webbing and sheets of the stuff hang from the ceiling (DC 20 Spot check to avoid walking into it and becoming entangled). He whistles for his pet spider swarms in area C-5 (if they have not been already been dealt with), to further slow the party. During the encounter, the Shackler, in his hissing nasally voice, tries to convince the characters that what he is doing is for the best and that change only brings suffering. If nearing defeat or driven to 10 hit points or less, the half-fiend begs for mercy, failing that he attempts to flee, perhaps using his hostage in area C-7 as a bargaining chip.

The Shackler, unique half-fiend ettercap: CR 6; Medium outsider (augmented aberration, native); HD 5d8+10; hp 33; Init +9; Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +7; Atk +7 bite melee (1d8+4 plus poison); Full Atk bite +7 melee (1d8+4 plus poison) and 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+2); SA Poison, spell-like abilities, web; SQ Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to poison, low-light vision, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 15; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 21, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +0 (+2 traps), Climb +20, Craft (trapmaking) +12, Hide +17, Jump +8,

Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Perform (dance) +4, Spot +14, Tumble +9; Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

SA – Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial damage 1d6 Dex, secondary damage 2d6 Dex.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day the Shackler can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra 5 points of damage against a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day – darkness; 1/day – desecrate, black tentacles, unholy blight (DC 14). The Shackler's *black tentacles* appear as shadowy undead spirits that look as though they are attempting to drag their captured prey down into the earth. Caster level 5th.

Web (Ex): The Shackler can throw a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets of up to Medium size. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement.

An entangled creature can escape with a DC 14 Escape Artist check or burst the web with a DC 18 Strength check. The web has 6 hit points, hardness 0, and takes double damage from fire.

The Shackler can also create sheets of sticky webbing from 5 to 60 feet square. He usually positions these to snare flying creatures, but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed on a DC 20 Spot check to notice a web, or they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing receive a

Veil of Preservation

The *Veil of Preservation* is a large sheet of knotted magical spider silk that can be worn as a veil or woven into a dress, sash or wrap. It can be used to carry items that would otherwise be too heavy or unwieldy with relative ease. As a standard action, a wearer can mentally command non-living items placed on to the veil to adhere or release from it. Items stuck to the web are held as tightly as items clasped in a belt pouch but are visible for all to see. Items stuck to the veil are considered weightless for purposes of encumbrance, while the veil itself weighs a constant 35 lb. It can hold up to 1000 lbs. of weight and up to fifty cubic feet of volume before items start falling off.

The veil uses up the character's cloak slot and provides a +3 armor bonus to AC.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9; Craft Magical Arms and Armor, *mage armor*, *secret chest*. Market Price 7,500 gp.

+5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot-square section has 6 hit points, hardness 0, and takes double damage from fire.

The Shackler can move across his own sheet web at his climb speed and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

Possessions: *Veil of preservation*, 2 sets of manacles with average locks, keys to the shrine's secret doors and his manacles.

Area C-7 – The Oubliette (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

The wall of this dry cave is lined with pigeon holes filled with rolled bits of vellum. A pair of small desks, and a sturdy iron bunk bed complete the furnishings.

This is Matron Ureiha and her young assistant Elsmay's chamber. The Shackler has manacled Elsmay to the bunk bed and plans on fattening the scrawny girl up before making a meal of her.

Creatures: Initiate Elsmay sits on the floor shackled to the frame of the bunk bed, while a swarm of diminutive devil spiders rests near the door. The spiders act as the Shackler's guard dogs, as they keep watch on the girl. They nest just above the door in a ghastly crawling pile.

Development: If Elsmay hears the characters or the sounds of battle in the next room she cries out for help. Likewise if the spiders hear either her or a battle they ready to attack the first creature through the door other than the Shackler.

Secret Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break 28; Search 20.

Devil Spider Swarm, fiendish spider swarm: CR 1; Diminutive magical beast (augmented vermin, extraplanar, swarm); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk swarm (1d6 plus poison); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA Distraction, poison, smite good; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, resistance to cold 5 and fire 5, spell resistance 7, swarm traits, tremorsense 30 ft., vermin traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 1, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Listen +4, Spot +4; Weapon Finesse.

SA – Distraction (Ex): Any living creature that begins its turn with a spider swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d3 Strength.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day a fiendish spider swarm can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra 2 points of damage against a good foe.

Elsmay, female human commoner 1: CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (currently chained to the bunk bed with masterwork manacles); AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk/Full Atk unarmed strike +0 melee (1d3); SA –; SQ –; AL NG, SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (vellum) +4, Decipher Script +1, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +2, Spot +2; Alertness, Run.

Possessions: None.

Manacles: Hardness 10; hp 10; Break 26; Escape Artist DC 30; Open Locks 20.

Treasure: Characters searching the pigeonholes, (DC 22) come up with 2 *scrolls of lesser restoration*, and a *divine scroll of bull's strength*.

Area D – The Shrine of Mad Rage

The Shrine of Shrine of Mad Rage is home to Vikramendra, a hate filled Weretiger tasked with ensuring that all who come to the shrine give in to its lure of rage. As people and animals of the jungle frequently visit the shrine, they are slain by Vikramendra and his Bagha barbarians and their carcasses litter the ground. Once time and the otyugh at D-2 have stripped the carcasses of flesh, the bones are then added to the skeletal ziggurat at D-3.

The shrine of Mad Rage was once the shrine of Nature's Tranquility, a place where people worshiped the quiet interaction between man and nature. The corruption of the shrine can be broken in two ways, as explained in area D-3.

Areas of the Map

Area D-1 – War Elephants (EL 6 or 8): Read or paraphrase the following:

The dense and oppressive jungle foliage parts to reveal a large clearing. The stench of rot and decay greets your nostrils as you survey a field of bones and carcasses partially striped of their flesh. Towards the center of the clearing is a small ziggurat made of ivory colored materials. Nearby, there are two lumbering elephants with riding platforms strapped to their backs. In each riding platform there are three men, naked but for loincloths, their bodies painted orange with

The Lure of Mad Rage

Upon entering the clearing, each adventurer feels a strong and building fury in their hearts. A black and angry bile rises in their throats and they feel on the edge of flying into an uncontrollable rage. Once a character enters combat (and any round after) they can give in to their anger and as a free action fly into a Mad Rage that is similar to the barbarian's rage. Alternatively the character must make a DC 12 Will save each round they are engaged in combat or be forced to enter into Mad Rage.

Once in a Mad Rage, the character temporarily gains a +4 bonus to Strength, a +4 bonus to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but he takes a -2 penalty to Armor Class. The increase in Constitution increases the character's hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the rage when his Constitution score drops back to normal. These extra hit points are not lost first the way temporary hit points are. While in a Mad Rage, the character cannot use any Charisma-, Dexterity-, or Intelligence-based skills (except for Balance, Escape Artist, Intimidate, and Ride), the Concentration skill, or any abilities that require patience or concentration, nor can he cast spells or activate magic items that require a command word, a spell trigger (such as a wand), or spell completion (such as a scroll) to function. He can use any feat he has except Combat Expertise, item creation feats, and metamagic feats.

A Mad Rage lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (newly improved) Constitution modifier. A character may not prematurely end his rage, but neither does he suffer the fatigued penalty. Once all of the character's enemies are defeated, he must make a DC 10 Will save to resist the urge to start fighting with his allies – each round of fighting amongst party member raises the DC of the Will save by 1. This ability can only be triggered once per day while in the clearing of the Shrine of Mad Rage. The Mad Rage may not stack with a barbarian's Rage ability.

The corruption of the shrine can be broken in two ways. The first is to resist the Lure of Rage. The party must defeat all of the encounters within the clearing without using the Lure of Rage special ability. This effect is instantaneous and the feelings of uncontrollable rage will dissipate instantly. The second way is to clear the shrine of the bone ziggurat and spend one hour in seeking forgiveness in meditation or cast *consecrate* on the shrine.

black stripes. One of the men is directing the elephant to do its work while the other two are armed and appear to be on guard.

Barbarians of the Bagha or "tiger" tribe are riding the elephants. The Bagha are serving Vikramendra in the hopes that he will bite them to make them powerful were-tigers. They are presently moving carcasses around and rooting out bones to add to the skeletal ziggurat and are under strict instructions to attack all strangers.

Special Note: This encounter is much more difficult on paper than in reality (or fantasy if you will...). The elephants have been trained for Heavy Labor and only know the tricks Come and Work (Come DC 15: The animal comes to you, even if it normally would not do so. Work DC 15: The animal pulls or pushes a medium or heavy load.). In order to use the elephant for combat, the rider must successfully "Push DC 25" an animal. To push an animal means to get it to perform a task or trick that it doesn't know but is physically capable of performing – such as charging and attacking. If the animal is wounded or has taken any nonlethal damage or ability score damage, the DC increases by 2. If your check succeeds, the animal performs the task or trick on its next action. The elephants are not interested in combat and if their riders are disposed of they will move away quickly and only fight if cornered. Do not reward experience for an EL 8 encounter unless the adventurers defeat the elephants.

Tactics: The Bagha driver will attempt to push his elephant mount into combat (Handle Animal DC 25) while the warriors attack the party with bows and arrows. If characters charge the elephants, the warriors will switch to longswords and use reach to attack the characters on the ground. The warriors and driver are ten feet off the ground and so can only be attacked by weapons with a reach of 10 ft. or more from characters adjacent to the elephants. Remember that the elephants will only attack one round after a successful Push DC 25 from the rider.

Bagha Warrior, male human Bbn1 (2): CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d12+1; hp 13 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flatfooted 14; Base Atk +1, Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk masterwork longsword +5 melee (1d8+3/x3) or composite longbow +3 ranged (1d8/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longsword); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Fast movement, illiteracy; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Intimidate +3, Jump +2, Listen +5, Survival +5; Dodge, Weapon Focus (longsword).

SA – Rage (Ex): Once per day, these barbarians can enter a state of fierce rage that last for 6

rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as they rage: AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 12; hp 15; Atk masterwork longspear +7 melee (1d8+3/x3); SV Fort +5, Will +3; Str 19, Con 17; Climb +4, Jump +4. At the end of their rage, these barbarians are fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: Masterwork longspear, composite longbow, 20 arrows, scale mail, *potion of cure light wounds* (CL 1).

Bagha Driver, male human Bbn1 (4): CR 1; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d12; hp 12 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flatfooted 14; Base Atk +1, Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk masterwork longspear +4 melee (1d8+3/x3) or composite longbow +3 ranged (1d8/x3); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with longspear); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Fast movement, illiteracy; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Handle Animal +7, Jump +1, Listen +4, Ride +8, Survival +4; Animal Affinity, Dodge.

SA – Rage (Ex): Once per day, these barbarians can enter a state of fierce rage that last for 6 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as they rage: AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 12; hp 14; Atk masterwork longspear +6 melee (1d8+3/x3); SV Fort +4, Will +3; Str 19, Con 15; Climb +3, Jump +3. At the end of their rage, these barbarians are fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Possessions: Masterwork longspear, composite longbow, 20 arrows, scale mail, *potion of cure light wounds* (CL 1).

Elephant: CR 7; Huge animal; HD 11d8+55; hp 104; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 8, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +8; Grp +25; Atk gore +15 melee (2d8+13); Full Atk slam +15 melee (2d6+9) and 2 stamps +10 melee (2d6+4); or gore +15 melee (2d8+13); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA Trample 2d8+13; SQ Low-light vision, scent; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 28, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7

Skills and Feats: Listen +14, Spot +11; Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Listen).

SA – Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 24.

Area D-2 – The Rot (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The stench of decay is particularly foul in this nook of the clearing, as most of the animal and humanoid carcasses here are bloated and just beginning to decay.

In this corner of the clearing, the bagha have been pushing carcasses to be stripped to the bone by a otyugh. The otyugh is in a foul mood and has yet to



use the Lure of Rage special ability yet today. It will do so and attack any who search his corner of the glade.

Tactics: Otyughs slash and squeeze opponents with their tentacles, which they also use to drag prey into their mouths.

Otyugh: CR 4; Large aberration; HD 6d8+9; hp 44; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +4; Grp +8; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d6); Full Atk 2 tentacles +4 melee (1d6) and bite –2 melee (1d4); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with tentacle); SA Constrict 1d6, disease, improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills and Feats: Hide –1 (+7 in lair), Listen +6, Spot +6; Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

SA – Constrict (Ex): An otyugh deals automatic tentacle damage with a successful grapple check.

Disease (Ex): Filth fever—bite, Fortitude DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days; damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, an otyugh must hit with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Area D-3 – The Bone Ziggurat over the Buried Shrine (EL 5 or 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

Towards the center of the glade, thousands of stripped white bones have been interwoven into a pile resembling a slightly misshapen ziggurat. Two lazy tigers recline sleepily on the lowest level of the ziggurat. Atop the ziggurat, twisting and placing bones into the structure, is a disheveled man with wild tangled hair and filthy hands and fingernails.

The disheveled ziggurat builder is Vikramendra, an insane weretiger who has been slowly turning the Shrine of Tranquility into an altar of carnage. Vikramendra ignores the adventurers until they speak directly to him or attack him, then he immediately transforms into his hybrid form and attacks. The tigers lounging on the ziggurat have already used the Lure of Rage today and are digesting the meal from the fight – they are not interested in fighting and will move off slowly in the event of a battle unless directly confronted.

Ad Hoc Experience Bonus: Cleansing the Shrine of Mad Rage will result in the adventures receiving a EL 4 experience bonus.

Tactics: Vikramendra prefers to pounce on his foes from the ziggurat and will direct all of his attacks on a single target until that target is disabled. Then he will quickly circle around and climb the ziggurat, using it for cover while picking a new target to pounce on.

Tiger (2): CR 4; Large animal; HD 6d8+18; hp 45 (38), 45 (32); Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +14; Atk claw +9 melee (1d8+6); Full Atk 2 claws +9 melee (1d8+6) and bite +4 melee (2d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Improved grab, pounce, rake 1d8+3; SQ Low-light vision, scent; Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3; AL N; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6;

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Hide +3 (+7 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth), Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Spot +3, Swim +11; Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (bite), and Improved Natural Attack (claw).

SA – Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a tiger must hit with a claw or bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If a tiger charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +9 melee, damage 1d8+3.

Vikramendra, male human weretiger (human form): CR 5; Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger); HD 1d8+1 plus 6d8+18; hp 50; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12; touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk short sword +6 melee (1d6+1/19-20) or composite longbow [+1 Str] +5 ranged (1d8+1/x3); SA –; SQ Alternate form, tiger empathy, low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Hide +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +6; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will.

Vikramendra, male human weretiger (tiger form): CR 5; Large humanoid (human, shapechanger); HD 1d8+1 plus 6d8+18; hp 50; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16; touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +16; Atk claw +11 melee (1d8+7); Full Atk 2 claws +11 melee (1d8+7) and bite +6 melee (2d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Pounce, improved grab, rake, curse of lycanthropy; SQ Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent, tiger empathy; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Climb +12, Handle Animal +3, Hide +2 (+6 in tall grass or heavy undergrowth), Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +6; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will.

Vikramendra, male human weretiger (hybrid form): CR 5; Large humanoid (human, shapechanger); HD 1d8+1 plus 6d8+18; hp 50; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16; touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +16; Atk claw +11 melee (1d8+7); Full Atk 2 claws +11 melee (1d8+7) and bite +6 melee (2d6+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Curse of lycanthropy; SQ Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent, tiger empathy; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +6, Climb +12, Handle Animal +3, Hide +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +6; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will.

SA – Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid or giant hit by a Vikramendra's bite attack in animal or hybrid form must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Vikramendra must be in tiger form and must hit with

a claw or bite attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If Vikramendra is in tiger form and charges an opponent, he can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +9 melee, damage 1d8+3.

SQ – Alternate Form (Su): A weretiger can assume a bipedal hybrid form or the form of a tiger.

Tiger Empathy (Ex): Vikramendra can communicate with tigers and dire tigers, and gains +4 racial bonus on Charisma-based checks against tigers and dire tigers.

Possessions: Short sword, composite longbow [+1 Str], 20 arrows, leather armor.

Treasure: A DC 12 Search check will reveal Vikramendra's treasure. +1 *heavy steel shield*; scroll: *see invisibility* (x3), *detect secret doors*; *wand of enlarge person* with 27 charges; scroll: *magic weapon, summon nature's ally III* (x2); silver comb with moonstones (300 gp); silver hairclip with moonstones (200 gp); silver brush with moonstones (500 gp); 15 pp, 175 gp, 242 sp.

Area E – The Temple of Askesis

Areas of the Map

Area E-1 – The Temple Grounds (EL 4 or 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

The final shrine is located three-quarters of the way up a steep hill overlooking the valley. The area surrounding the Temple of Askesis is rife with ivy-covered statuary, standing stones and smaller open-air shrines dedicated to the various aspects of the Divine. A small waterfall trickles from the overhang that the temple is built into, providing water for the once lush gardens.

With the reincarnation of Baldev into his apostate form, the water has grown foul and the gardens are slowly dying to the spiritual poison that infests the land. The decorative support pillars that once resembled celebrants, scholars and holy men have twisted into fiendish drunken revelers. The relief murals covering every wall that once depicted many aspects of mortal and divine life have morphed into a devilish debauch.

At all hours of the day and night there are eight monks holding vigil in the gardens of the temple.

Intruders are challenged and dealt with violently. Combat in the gardens will bring monks from throughout the complex (Listen Check DC 10) pouring into the main gardens to rebuke attackers. There are a total of 18 temple monks living and working on the grounds. The Initiate Baldev will not disturb his concentration however, and will remain in his quarters until directly confronted.

Temple Monks, male human monk1 (6): CR 1; Medium humanoid (humanoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flatfooted 11; Base Atk +0; Grp +2; Atk unarmed strike +3 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk unarmed strike +1/+1 melee (1d6+2); SA Flurry of blows, stunning fist 1/day (DC 11); SQ –; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Climb +4, Escape Artist +4, Hide +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, Tumble +4; Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: None.

Area E-2 – The Vestibule (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

A large statue of a multi-armed woman is the main feature in this open vestibule. Mosaic lines the floor and walls depicting scenes of monks in various noble pursuits – reading, training, exercising, and meditating. There are three doors and a wide banister stair spirals down into the dark depths beneath the temple.

The stairwell connects the ground floor of the shrine to the area far below. Since his return from the underworld, Initiate Baldev has replaced the various wall hangings in this area with wall mounts to hang various intricately crafted display weapons, including a pair of spears, a morningstar, a loaded heavy crossbow, a pair of quarterstaves, a great axe, a pair of kamas, a pair of sai, and a small steel spiked shield. The weapons can be drawn as per the normal rules of drawing a weapon by anyone standing nearby. If Baldev hears the characters approach from below he meets them in this area.

Tactics: If he has time before the characters arrive, Baldev casts *disguise self* (to look human again), *protection from good* and *eagle's splendor*. He casts *desecrate* if the Multiplicity of Sins curse has been negated by the characters' previous actions. He then tries to talk the characters into giving in to his dogma of self-indulgence. If a battle breaks out here, Baldev uses his mobility and acrobatic prowess to move along the spiraling steps (and even banister) and grant him an edge, while at the

same time using the various decorative weapons as needed, and the stair for cover. He will also discard (or throw) weapons at need to grab ones more suited for the next round of battle. At the start of the battle, Baldev calls out to the dark spirits of the void for aid and they grant it to him by raising any of the monks slain in area E-1 or E-3 as standard zombies who then come to aid the undead initiate. If the battle goes ill for him (after he loses 20 hp) he will drink his *potion of invisibility* and flee silently down the steps to try and rouse the guardian statue in Soleth's Shrine (Area E-4).

Initiate Baldev the Resurrected, ghoulish cleric 4/monk 2: CR 7; Medium undead; HD 8d12; hp 55; Init +8; Spd 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus disease and paralysis) or unarmed strike +8 melee (1d6+3); Full Atk bite +8 melee (1d6+3 plus disease and paralysis) and 2 claws +6 melee (1d3+1 plus paralysis) or unarmed strike +6/+6 melee (1d6+3); SA Flurry of blows, ghoul fever, paralysis, sponta-

Manifold Sins

The temple itself does not have its own curse, instead the Manifold Sins functions as a consequence of the actions the characters have taken as they progressed through the valley. If the characters' actions were positive, righteous and pure then the encounter at the final temple will be eased. If, however, the party pursued a path of greed, lust, undo attachment, and anger the final encounter will be more difficult. When the Initiate Baldev summons the avatar of the temple, control of the creature will be determined each round by rolling a 1d6. A roll of a 1 indicates the avatar fights for Initiate Baldev under the control of the GM. A roll of a 6 indicates that the avatar fights for that round under the control of the party members. For each temple cleansed, and each curse broken, their chance of controlling the avatar increases by 18% or 1 in 6. If the party lifted the curse of the Lodestone of Greed, remade the shards into *the Devadasis*, lifted the Dread Remembrance, and resisted the Lure of Frenzy then they could conceivably control the avatar on a 4-6 on 1d6. Likewise every failure to cleanse a shrine gives Initiate Baldev an increase of 18% or 1 in 6 increase chance to control the avatar.

In addition, the Temple of Askesis is under the effects of an area wide *desecrate* spell as long as any of the other shrines is tainted by corruption. If the characters have succeeded in clearing all the other shrines in the valley of their curses, this effect fades by the time they arrive here.

neous casting (*inflict* spells), stunning fist 3/day (DC 18); SQ Command undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+5), dark-vision 60 ft., evasion, undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +15; Str 16, Dex 18, Con —, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +8, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +8, Hide +9, Jump +14, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Spellcraft +6, Spot +10, Tumble +12; Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Stunning Fist.

SA — *Ghoul Fever* (Su): Disease—bite, Fortitude DC 15, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by Baldev's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elves have immunity to this paralysis.

Spells Prepared (5/5+1/3+1; DC 15 + spell level; Domains: Evil, Trickery): 0 — *create water, guidance, mending, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *bane, cause fear, command, death watch, disguise self*, protection from good* (CL 5); 2nd — *death knell* (CL 5), *desecrate** (CL 5), *eagle's splendor, silence*.

*Domain spell.

Possessions: *Bracers of armor* +2, *toga of Charisma* +2 (as cloak), *wooden sandals of striding and springing* (as boots), *potion of invisibility* (CL 3).

Area E-3 – The Monk's Chambers (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

This sparse chamber is practically empty. The only furnishings present are a half a dozen uncomfortable looking woven sleeping mats are on the floor.

Unless they have left to join the battle against intruders there are two temple monks resting in this room.

Temple Monks, male human monk1 (2): CR 1; Medium humanoid (humanoid); HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flatfooted 11; Base Atk +0; Grp +2; Atk unarmed strike +3 melee (1d6+2); Full Atk unarmed strike +1/+1 melee (1d6+2); SA Flurry of blows, stunning fist 1/day (DC 11); SQ —; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Climb +4, Escape Artist +4, Hide +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3, Tumble +4; Dodge, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Possessions: None.

Area E-4 – Shrine of Soleth (EL Varies): Read or paraphrase the following:

This chamber is deep within the stone beneath the temple. The rough-hewn western wall sports a larger than life relief figure of a dancing multi-armed woman. Throughout the room there are lean pillars carved to look like dancers that support the oppressive stone ceiling. The outside walls are carved to resemble the lids of sarcophagi, each lid features two eyes carved to give the illusion that you are being watched from all angles. The air hangs thick with incense and sonorous chanting.

This is the inner sanctum of the temple once devoted to the worship of Soleth and the simple life of the aesthetic monk. It has been perverted by the evil of Initiate Baldev. The relief figure of a dancing woman is in fact a shield guardian tasked with observing the commands of he who controls the shrines and the temple (instead of the bearer of the *shield guardian amulet*). If attacked in his sanctum, Baldev will call forth the guardian - assuming that he is still in control of all of the shrines – see the Sidebar: Manifold Sins for a complete explanation of how the Shield Guardian control passes between the Initiate Baldev and the party. Initiate Baldev believes that the statue is an avatar of his god Soleth, he is mistaken... Once Baldev or the party is defeated, the statue control reverts 100% to whoever is still conscious.

Note: Award experience for this encounter based on the percentage of control that Initiate Baldev had over the shield guardian. For example if Baldev controlled the guardian 50% of the time (or 1-3 on 1d6) then give the party a reward for defeating a CR 8 creature multiplied by 50%.

Statue of Soleth, unique shield guardian: CR 8; Large construct; HD 15d10+30; hp 112; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +11; Grp +21; Atk slam +16 melee (1d8+6); Full Atk 2 slams +16 melee (1d8+6); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA –; SQ Construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, find master, guard, low-light vision, *shield other*, *spell storing*; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 10, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: None.

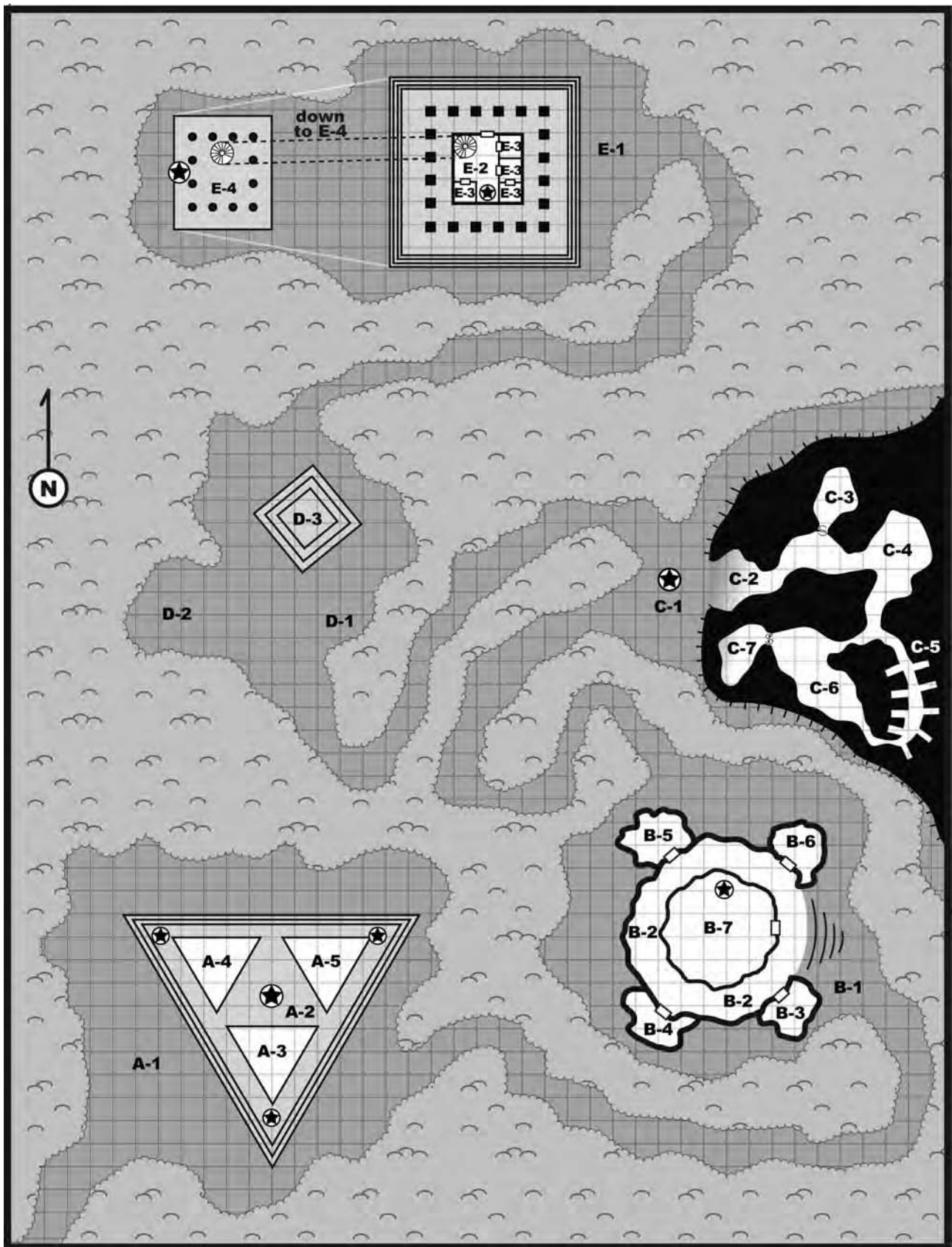
SQ – Bound to Temple (Su): As long as there are shrines in the Valley of Indus, the statue of Soleth must remain in the Temple of Askesis.

Guard (Ex): If ordered to do so, the statue of Soleth moves swiftly to defend the temple master, blocking blows and disrupting foes. All attacks against the temple master take a –2 penalty when the statue is adjacent to its master.

Shield Other (Sp): The temple master can activate this defensive ability if within 100 feet of the statue of Soleth. Just as the spell of the same name, this ability transfers to the statue of Soleth half the damage that would be dealt to the temple master (this ability does not provide the spell's AC or save bonuses).

Spell Storing (Sp): The statue of Soleth can store one spell of 4th level or lower that is cast into it by another creature. It “casts” this spell when commanded to do so or when a predefined situation arises. Once this spell is used, the statue of Soleth can store another spell (or the same spell again).

Treasure: A large chest is overflowing with treasure: +2 short sword; wand of charm animal I (23 charges); scroll: false life (x3), burning hands, alarm, disguise self, owl's wisdom, boots of elvenkind; solid gold idol (10 lb.) 600 gp; cloth of gold vestments 90 gp; golden circlet with four aquamarines 2,000 gp; embroidered and bejeweled robes 1,000 gp, 435gp, 1234 sp. (8,310 gp).



□ = 10 ft.

Appendix 1: New Monsters

CLOCKWORK RAT

Small Construct

Hit Dice: 1d10 (5hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex., +2 natural armor), touch 13, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple: +0/+4
Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d4)
Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks: Razor bite
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 1/-, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -4
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 16, Con —, Int —, Wis 3, Cha 1
Skills: Balance +6, Climb +8
Feats: Weapon Finesse
Environment: Any
Organization: Pair or Swarm (3-6)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

A clockwork rat is an odd creation of gears and cogs, in the rough semblance of a large, rigid rat roughly two feet in length. Clockwork rats are small, but resilient and fast for their size.

Combat

Razor Bite (Ex): If a clockwork rat scores a critical hit in combat, the target must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for 1d3 rounds from blood loss. A DC 15 Heal check or any healing effect that heals hit point damage stops the blood loss.

DEBASED

In some societies there exists accursed beings that have completely surrendered to their most carnal and basic instincts. These individuals have become twisted and feral, delighting in inflicting pain, feasting on the flesh of their foes, and the instant gratification of their every impulse. To those that know of them and their vile practices, these wretched creatures are called “Debased”.

Debased creatures appear much as their normal counterparts. However, closer inspection reveals cruel fea-

tures, sharp wolfish teeth, long and sharp fingernails, and eyes agleam with madness and malignancy.

Sample Debased Creature

This example uses a 4th-level human fighter as the base creature.

Debased Male Human Ftr4

Medium Humanoid (Augmented Human)

Hit Dice: 4d10+15 (37 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+2 Dex, +2 natural, +3 hide armor), touch 12, flat-footed 15
BAB/Grapple: +4/+13
Attack: Claw +9 melee (1d4+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +9 melee (1d4+5) and bite +4 melee (1d6+2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, rend 2d4+7
Special Qualities: Fast healing 5, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +1
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 4
Skills: Climb +6, Jump +6, Listen +3, Spot +3, Swim +4
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness^B, Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

A hunched humanoid figure in ragged hides regards you with a crazed gleam in his eyes. He smiles, revealing long, sharp teeth, and springs toward you with a bloodcurdling howl.

This debased human fighter has devolved into little more than a bloodthirsty monster.

Combat

This sample debased human fighter has eschewed any manufactured weaponry in favor of his sharp claws and teeth, so that he may feel the blood of his enemies on his hands and tongue as he literally eats his foes alive.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a debased human fighter hits

an opponent of Medium size or smaller with a claw attack, he deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he gets a hold, he deals automatic rend damage. Debased creatures get a +4 circumstance bonus on all Grapple checks.

Rend (Ex): If a debased human fighter hits with both claw attacks, he latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. The attack automatically deals an additional 2d4+7 points of damage.

Creating a Debased Creature

"Debased" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal aberration, fey, giant, humanoid or monstrous humanoid (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A debased creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type is unchanged, though it gains the augmented subtype. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase the base creature's racial HD by one die size, to a maximum of d12. Do not increase class HD.

Speed: Same as the base creature.

Armor Class: Natural armor improves by +2 (this stacks with any natural armor the base creature has).

Attack: A debased creature has two claw attacks and a bite attack, and the claws are the primary natural weapon. If the base creature can use weapons, the debased creature retains this ability. A debased creature fighting without weapons uses a claw when making an attack action. When it has a weapon, it usually uses the weapon instead.

Full Attack: A debased creature fighting without weapons uses both claws and its bite when making a full attack. If armed with a weapon, it usually uses the weapon as its primary attack and its bite as a natural secondary attack. If it has a hand free, it uses a claw as an additional natural secondary attack.

Damage: Debased creatures have bite and claw attacks. If the base creature does not have these attack forms, use the damage values in the table below. Otherwise, use the values below or the base creature's damage values, whichever is greater.

| Size | Bite Damage | Claw Damage |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Fine | 1 | — |
| Diminutive | 1d2 | 1 |
| Tiny | 1d3 | 1d2 |
| Small | 1d4 | 1d3 |
| Medium | 1d6 | 1d4 |
| Large | 1d8 | 1d6 |
| Huge | 2d6 | 1d8 |
| Gargantuan | 3d6 | 2d6 |
| Colossal | 4d6 | 3d6 |

Special Attacks: A debased creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and gains the following special attacks.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a debased creature hits an opponent that is its size or smaller with a claw attack, it deals normal damage and can attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it deals automatic rend damage. Debased creatures have a +4 circumstance bonus on all Grapple checks.

Rend (Ex): If a debased creature hits with both claw attacks, it latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. The attack automatically deals damage for both claws plus 1 ? times the debased creature's Strength modifier (applied only once, not to both claws).

Special Qualities: A debased creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus the following special qualities.

- Fast healing 5.
- Low-light vision.

Feats: A debased creature gains Toughness as a bonus feat.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Con +4, Int -2, Cha -4.

Environment: Any

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +2.

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +3.

GIANT HORNED WASP

| | Worker | Soldier | Queen |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| | <i>Large vermin</i> | <i>Large vermin</i> | <i>Large Vermin</i> |
| Hit Dice: | 3d8+3 (15 hp) | 5d8+10 (32 hp) | 8d8+24 (60 hp) |
| Initiative: | +1 | +1 | +1 |
| Speed: | 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good) | 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good) | 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (good) |
| AC: | 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13 | 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14 | 16 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 15 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +2/+8 | +3/+11 | +6/+15 |
| Attack: | Sting +2 melee (1d3+3 plus poison) | Sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison) | Sting +10 melee (1d3+7 plus poison) |
| Full Atk: | Sting +2 melee (1d3+3 plus poison) | Sting +6 melee (1d3+6 plus poison) | Sting +10 melee (1d3+7 plus poison) |
| Space/Reach: | 10 ft./5 ft. | 10 ft./5 ft. | 10 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Poison | Poison | Poison |
| SA: | Darkvision 60 ft., pheromones, suicidal sting, vermin traits | Darkvision 60 ft., suicidal sting, vermin traits | Darkvision 60 ft., suicidal sting, vermin traits |
| Saves: | Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2 | Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2 | Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +4 |
| Abilities: | Str 15, Dex 12, Con 12, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 9 | Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int –, Wis 13, Cha 11 | Str 21, Dex 12, Con 16, Int –, Wis 14, Cha 13 |
| Skills: | Spot +9, Survival +1 | Spot +9, Survival +1 | Spot +10, Survival +2 |
| Environment: | Temperate forests | Temperate forests | Temperate forests |
| Organization: | Gang (2-12) or crew (6-12 plus 1 soldier) | Solitary or gang (2-6) | Nest (1 plus 5-50 workers and 5-25 soldiers) |
| CR: | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Treasure: | None | None | None |
| Alignment: | Always neutral | Always neutral | Always neutral |
| Advancement: | 4-5 HD (Large), 6-9 HD (Huge) | 6-8 HD (Large), 9-15 HD (Huge) | 9-12 HD (Large), 13-20 HD (Huge) |

These insects are black with yellow markings on the carapace and they have rusty colored wings. A pair of distinctive, horn-like organs fringe the head. Soldiers are indistinguishable from workers and queens except for an ominous yellow pattern clearly visible on their abdomens.

Giant horned wasps are aggressive insects with a unique caste system. The colony is ruled by a single queen. Male soldiers hunt and see to the defense of the colony, while female workers build and maintain the nest. The workers chew up wood and other plant matter to create a resilient, paperlike pulp, used in nest construction.

Combat

Workers are nonaggressive and always use their pheromone ability to call soldiers to their defense. They will sting only if provoked. Soldiers, on the other hand, attack enemies with extreme prejudice. Being social insects, giant horned wasps do not value their own lives and never flee from battle, even when overwhelmingly outnumbered.

Poison: All giant horned wasps have a poisonous stinger. The amount of initial and secondary damage dealt by a sting attack and the save DC varies by caste, as shown on the table below. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

| | Initial | Secondary | |
|--------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Caste | Damage | Damage | Fort DC |
| Worker | 1d3 Dex | 1d3 Dex | 12 |
| Soldier | 1d6 Dex | 1d6 Dex | 14 |
| Queen | 1d8 Dex | 1d8 Dex | 17 |

Suicidal Sting: Giant horned wasps have barbs on their stingers that become embedded when a sting is delivered. Many will lose their stingers during a successful attack and become eviscerated in the process. Each time an enemy fails a saving throw versus its poison, a giant horned wasp must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15) or die immediately.

Pheromones: Once per day, worker wasps can emit a pheromone as a standard action that calls 1d3 soldier wasps to the area. Soldiers called in this manner must be within 100 feet to sense the pheromone and arrive in 1d4 rounds.

Skills: Giant horned wasps have a +8 racial bonus on Spot checks. *They also have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks to orient themselves.

GIANT LOBSTER

Large Vermin (Aquatic)

Hit Dice: 8d8+32 (72 hp)
Initiative: -1
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (-1 Dex, -1 size, +9 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 17
BAB/Grapple: +6/+15
Attack: Claw +10 melee (1d6+5)
Full Attack: 2 claws +10 melee (1d6+5)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d6+5, improved grab
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 8, Con 18, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills: –
Feats: –
Environment: Temperate aquatic
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 9-15 HD (Large); 16-24 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: –

The giant lobster is an aggressive saltwater creature that many underwater races have adapted to guard duty. They can be found singly (commonly) or as a pair (rarely in the wild but more commonly as guards). Against foes of their size or smaller, they aggressively rush their opponents but against creatures larger than themselves, they tend to back away into corners, caves, or against walls.

Giant lobsters are normally 8 to 9 feet long and weigh 900 pounds.

Combat

Constrict (Ex): A giant lobster deals automatic claw damage on a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the giant lobster must hit with its claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking on attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

GOLEM, SOAP

Medium Construct

Hit Dice: 7d10+20 (58 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple: +5/+9
Attack: Slam +9 melee (1d8+4)
Full Attack: 2 slams +9 melee (1d8+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft. /5 ft.
Special Attacks: Blinding strike, grease
Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision, suds cloud
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: Escape Artist +11, Swim +12
Feats: –
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 8-10 HD (Medium); 11-21 HD (Large)

The cloud of soap bubbles parts to reveal a strangely unformed humanoid creature with creamy white skin and tiny black holes for eyes that look at you emotionlessly. A beautiful floral scent invades your nostrils, even as the creature reaches towards you with arms dripping with water.

Soap golems are constructs created by eccentric wizards to protect their bathrooms. One of the rarest sorts of golems, soap golems usually take the form of a large cloud of suds and hover near their creator while the wizard is taking a bath or engaged in some other pursuit.

A typical soap golem has creamy or milky white skin, and no facial features of any kind except for eyes. A typical soap golem is 5 feet tall and weighs about 80 pounds.

Combat

A soap golem is usually in its suds cloud form when first encountered, but assumes its normal form when it detects intruders. It pounds creatures into the ground with its surprisingly hard fists, while relying on its grease ability to unbalance opponents. If severely damaged, a soap golem assumes its suds cloud form to regain lost hit points.

Blinding Strike (Ex): If a soap golem scores a critical hit against an opponent, the creature gets soap in its eyes and is automatically blinded for 1d4 rounds. This ability does not work against constructs, plants, oozes, undead, or creatures without eyes.

Grease (Ex): The soap golem constantly extrudes a slippery residue, which gives it a +10 bonus on Escape Artist checks and coats a 5-foot-radius of the floor around the creature. Any creature in an adjacent square to a soap golem must make a DC 13 Reflex save or fall prone, just as if affected by a *grease* spell. The saving throw for this ability is Constitution-based.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A soap golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the golem, as noted below.

Acid attacks such as *acid storm* deal full damage to a soap golem, and a *disintegrate* spell does 5d6 points of damage regardless of the save. A *grease* spell cast on a soap golem heals it for 10 hit points, while a jar of *universal solvent* hurled at the creature deals 10d6 points of damage if it hits.

Suds Cloud (Su): Once per day as a standard action a soap golem can transform itself into a cloud of soap-suds or bubbles. This ability functions exactly like the *gaseous form* spell, and the soap golem gains fast healing 2 while in this form. The soap golem can resume its normal form as a free action.

Skills: The soap golem gains a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks, and can take 10 on Swim checks even if rushed or threatened. The soap golem can use the run action while swimming, as long as it moves in a straight line.

MAKTAR

Maktar War1, Small Humanoid

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Hit Dice: | 1d8+1 (5 hp) |
| Initiative: | +1 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 small wooden shield), touch 12, flat-footed 12 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +1/-3 |
| Attack: | Short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3) |
| Full Attack: | Short sword +2 melee (1d4-1/19-20) or composite shortbow +3 ranged (1d6/x3) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | — |
| Special Qualities: | Blink, low-light vision. |
| Saves: | Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1 |
| Abilities: | Str 10, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 6 |
| Skills: | Climb +8, Hide +7*, Listen +2, Move Silently +3*, Spot +2 |
| Alertness | |
| Feats: | Alertness |
| Environment: | Temperate forests |
| Organization: | Troupe (4-9), war party (10-24 plus 1-4 Medium monstrous spiders), tribe (10-100 plus 100% noncombatants plus 1 3rd-level elite per 20 adults, 1 leader of 5th-7th level, 2-12 Medium monstrous spiders, and 1-4 Large monstrous spiders) |
| Challenge Rating: | 1 |
| Treasure: | Standard |
| Alignment: | Usually lawful evil |
| Advancement: | By character class |
| Level Adjustment: | +0 |

This small, humanoid resembles a small, primitive elf with large cat-like eyes and long, tangled black hair. It wears coarse animal skins and lives in the treetops of isolated forests.

Maktar are distant, primitive cousins of rift elves and wood elves. They are fast, mischievous tree dwellers that prefer to spend their time among the branches. Malicious and cruel, the maktar enjoy tormenting those who are weaker than they are, and delight in bullying any strangers or travelers they encounter in their forest domains.

A maktar stands just over 3 feet tall, and weighs between 25 to 35 pounds. They walk in startlingly long leaps and bounds, covering vast amounts of distance in quick steps. Their skins are silvery and almost translucent, making them seem almost frail and sickly at first glance. In contrast to their pale skin, they have long,

gnarled black hair and catlike eyes that are always dark blue or dark purple in color.

Maktar speak their own language as well as Elven. Their maktar language uses a fairly simple system of hand signs and gestures, and apparently shares some roots with the language of the drow. Creatures who understand the drow language can understand the rudimentary basics of the maktar language, and communicate with them in simple terms.

Combat

Masters of ambush, the maktar normally attack unwary prey by dropping from their lairs or outposts in the treetops. They attack in waves, engaging in melee with their short swords, then using their *blink* ability to move away to safety, while other maktar press the attack from a distance with bows. Their attacks tend to be well-coordinated and well-planned; if surprised in combat, the maktar have no problems retreating in order to fight another day.

Blink (Sp): Three times per day, a maktar can use *blink* as the spell (caster level 8th), and can evoke or end the effect as a free action.

Skills: Maktar have a +2 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. Maktar can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. *In thickly forested areas the Hide and Move Silently bonus improves to +4.

Maktar uses their Dexterity modifier instead of their Strength modifier for Climb checks.

The Maktar warrior presented here had the following ability scores before racial adjustments: Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Maktar Society

The Maktar live in highly disciplined tribes, which normally consist of several families. Their tribes live in a series of large trees interconnected by ropes, vines, and rickety wooden platforms. Ever restless, the maktar tend to live in a particular area for only a year or two before moving on and establishing a new settlement elsewhere in the treetops.

Maktar have an obsessive fondness for spiders, which leads many sages to further wonder about any long-ago connection between the maktar and the drow. Some maktar have a knack for training spiders as beasts of burden and steeds of war. Skilled maktar warriors are known to ride Medium or Large-sized monstrous spiders into battle, charging headlong into combat atop eight-legged monsters with a horrific battle cry.

Maktar as Characters

Maktar leaders tend to be rogues or fighter/rogues. Maktar clerics worship the deity Molgrem, and may choose to follow two of the following domains: Destruction, Evil, Law, or War.

Maktar characters possess the following racial traits.

- -2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, -2 Charisma.
- Small size: +1 bonus to Armor Class, +1 bonus on attack rolls, +4 bonus on Hide checks, -4 penalty on grapple checks, lifting and carrying limits 3/4 those of Medium characters.
- Maktar base land speed is 30 feet.
- Maktar have a climb speed of 20 feet.
- Maktar have a +2 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks. Maktar can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. In thickly forested areas the Hide and Move Silently bonus improves to +4.
- Maktar uses their Dexterity modifier instead of their Strength modifier for Climb checks.
- Low-light vision.
- Automatic Languages: Maktar and Elven. Bonus Languages: Common, Draconic, Drow Sign Language, Sylvan.
- Favored Class: Rogue

MESMERDRAKE

Large Magical Beast

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Hit Dice: | 6d10+18 (51 hp) |
| Initiative: | +6 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +6/+12 |
| Attack: | Bite +7 melee (1d6+2) |
| Full Attack: | Bite +7 melee (1d6+2) and tail lash +2 melee (1d4+1) |
| Space/Reach: | 10 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Draining aura, mesmerizing glare |
| Special Qualities: | Camouflage, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision |
| Saves: | Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5 |
| Abilities: | Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 16 |
| Skills: | Climb +10, Hide +3*, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Spot +7 |
| Feats: | Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Stealthy |

Environment: Temperate and tropical forests
Organization: Solitary or mesmer (2–4)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 7–12 HD (Large); 13–18 HD (Huge)

The mass of soft green foliage in front of you suddenly shifts into the shape of a creature with a vaguely lizard-like head and a long serpentine body. The creature's skin is every shade of forest green, and its glinting blood-red eyes are as large as saucers.

The mesmerdrake, despite its name, is a type of magical lizard rather than a dragon, but is just as feared as any dragon by many jungle-dwelling societies. A devious predator, a mesmerdrake ambushes its prey with its mesmerizing glare, then drains the life energy out of its prey with its terrible aura until nothing more than skin and bones remain. While not usually evil, the mesmerdrake is an opportunistic feeder, and will attack even a large, well-armed party if it thinks that it can get away with it.

The standard mesmerdrake is just over 10 feet long and very thin, with greenish scales resembling leaves, vestigial claws, and a long prehensile tail which aids it in climbing. The most arresting feature of a mesmerdrake is its blood red eyes, which glow when it uses its mesmerizing power.

A mesmerdrake cannot speak, and seldom makes any sounds except for a series of low whistles (only used when attracting mates).

Combat

A mesmerdrake always attempts to attack with surprise and might withdraw into the heights of a nearby tree if spotted before it can launch an attack. It usually tries to transfix creatures with its glare before moving close enough to let its draining aura take over. If forced into battle, a mesmerdrake bites with its toothy maw and lashes out with its tail, relying on its draining aura to help shorten the combat.

Camouflage (Ex): A mesmerdrake can blend in with its surroundings as long as there is a sufficient amount of vegetation present. This ability does not work in environments without vegetation (such as a typical dungeon or desert). The camouflage ability grants the mesmerdrake a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Draining Aura (Su): The mesmerdrake radiates an aura that drains the life force from all living creatures a 10-foot-radius. Creatures in this area take 1d6 hit points of damage for each round they remain within the aura. The mesmerdrake does not gain any hit points from its aura, but this is the principal way it feeds on

prey. There is no saving throw against the aura, and the mesmerdrake can quell or resume it as a free action.

Mesmerizing Glare (Su): All creatures within 30 feet of the mesmerdrake must make a DC 16 Will save or be transfixed for 1d6+2 rounds. Any creature transfixed by the glare is treated as being dazed. Any creature that makes its saving throw against the mesmerizing gaze or has already been dazed once cannot be affected again by the same mesmerdrake for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting gaze attack. The saving throw for the ability is Charisma-based.

Skills: A mesmerdrake gains a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can take 10 on a Climb check even while rushed or threatened. A mesmerdrake also gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

MINOTAUR-BLOODED

Medium Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 2d8+7 (16 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 hide armor), touch 13, flat-footed 12
BAB/Grapple: +2/+6
Attack: Battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+4/x3)
Full Attack: Battleaxe +6 melee (1d8+4/x3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., inbred cunning
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +6, Jump +6, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +4
Feats: Toughness
Environment: Any
Organization: Usually solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually evil
Advancement: By character level

The shaggy humanoid before you has a beastly appearance: pronounced brow, deeply tanned skin and a flattened nose. Two small, knobby horns poke out through its mat of unkempt hair. Its hairy arms, legs and chest bulge with muscle.

The minotaur-blooded is a creature born of tragedy, the child of a human and a minotaur, certainly rejected by both sides of his lineage. His physical strength and cagy intellect make him a natural leader for bands of humanoids. Rare in the extreme, the few minotaur-blooded that survive to adulthood must find their way outside of society.

Minotaur-blooded range from 6 1/2 to 7 feet tall and are very broad. Their faces are slightly bovine, typically with wide noses, a pronounced brow, wooly hair and a pair of short, knobby horns. Their bodies are typically extremely hirsute and muscular.

Combat

A minotaur-blooded is a canny opponent, surviving as it must on the fringes of a hostile society. If enraged or confident of victory, it may face foes head on, but their specialty is subterfuge and clever tactics. If they have the opportunity, they will take full advantage of their inbred cunning ability to lead opponents into some kind of difficult labyrinth or other terrain they can take advantage of, perhaps trying to isolate members of groups to dispatch one at a time. They are born and bred survivors and will do whatever it takes to walk away from an encounter, including lying, begging for mercy or simply running away.

Inbred Cunning (Ex): The minotaur-blooded possesses a touch of the innate logic of its monstrous forebear. It receives a +4 racial bonus on saving throws against *maze* spells, and receives a +4 racial bonus on Intelligence checks dealing with direction or negotiating a labyrinth of any kind.

Minotaur-blooded as Characters

Minotaur-blooded characters possess the following racial traits:

- +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, -4 Intelligence, -2 Charisma.
- Medium size.
- Space/Reach: 5 feet/5 feet.
- A minotaur-blooded's base land speed is 30 feet.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Racial hit dice: A minotaur-blooded begins with 2 levels of monstrous humanoid, which provide 2d8 Hit Dice, a base attack bonus of +2, and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +0, Ref +2, and Will +2
- Racial Skills: A minotaur-blooded's monstrous humanoid levels give it skill points equal to 5 x (2 + Int modifier, minimum 1). Its class skills are Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Search and Spot. Minotaur-blooded have a +2 racial bonus on Search, Spot and Listen checks.
- Racial Feats: A minotaur-blooded's monstrous humanoid levels give it one feat.
- Special Qualities (see above): Inbred cunning.
- Automatic Languages: Common and Giant. Bonus Languages: Goblin, Orcish.
- Favored Class: Barbarian.
- Level Adjustment: +1.

RIFT ELVES

Tall as humans, these gaunt, arrogant elves are much stronger than other elves. Their hair color is always jet-black, and they prefer their rough-hewn clothing in murky shades of green and black.

Also known as Amn'crith elves, rift elves are typically only found in the deepest regions of the Amn'crith Forest, and as such, they are little known throughout most of the Known Realms. Most scholars believe them to either be an offshoot of the wood elves, or perhaps even an ancient race of elf that predates even the oldest of the high elves or gray elves. Whatever their origins, this much is known for sure: rift elves hate most races of intelligent creatures, particularly other types of elves, and wish to remain undisturbed in the darkest, most desolate regions of the Amn'crith. To that end, most other creatures in the Known Realms are all too happy to accommodate those desires.

Little is known of the activities of the rift elves in the Amn'crith, save for their high interest in the various planes of existence and magical travel between those planes. It is believed that a handful of powerful rift elf sorcerers possess enchanted metal glyphs that allow them to open up doorways or rifts to other dimensions (which is how the reclusive creatures received their common name). They have also been known in recent years to reluctantly ally themselves with tribes of mak-tar and, curiously enough, bugbears. The reasons behind these strange alliances – like the rift elves themselves – are shrouded in mystery ...

Rift Elf Traits (Ex): These traits are in addition to the high elf traits, except where noted.

- +2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma.
- +2 on all Handle Animal checks, and any Charisma-based checks directly involving animals (such as wild empathy checks).
- +4 racial bonus to Disguise checks.
- Favored Class: Ranger. This trait replaces the high elf's favored class. Additionally, rift elves may select elves as a favored enemy – this applies to all other races of elves (besides rift elves, of course).

SHADOW SYLPH

Medium Fey

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Hit Dice: | 5d6+5 (22 hp) |
| Initiative: | +2 |
| Speed: | 30 ft. |
| Armor Class: | 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather), touch 12, flat-footed 12 |
| BAB/Grapple: | +2/+2 |
| Attack: | Longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3) |
| Full Attack: | Longbow +5 ranged (1d8/x3) |
| Space/Reach: | 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Attacks: | Spell-like abilities |
| Special Qualities: | Damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., shadow walk |
| Saves: | Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5 |
| Abilities: | Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13 |
| Skills: | Bluff +9, Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Ride +10, Spot +9, Survival +9 |
| Feats: | Stealthy, Weapon Focus (Longbow) |
| Environment: | Any forest |
| Organization: | Gang (2-4), band (6-11), or tribe (20-80) |
| Challenge Rating: | 3 |
| Treasure: | Standard |
| Alignment: | Usually neutral evil |
| Advancement: | By character class |
| Level Adjustment: | +3 |

This creature is humanoid in shape, but slim and slight, with pale grey skin and completely black eyes. An unnatural pall of shadow hangs around it, making it hard to pinpoint as it seems to vanish into the darkness.

The shadow sylphs are a race of evil fey with shadow and illusion abilities. They resemble elves in their physical build and tend to wear their black hair long and flowing. Always cloaked in shifting shadows, these fey can move through the darkness, disappearing and appearing in unexpected places. Although they prefer to act at night, shadow sylphs are not harmed by daylight. Shadow sylphs live in dark wild places: tangled woods, shadowy overhanging rocks, and deep mountain gorges. Territorial and capricious, they do not care for intruders.

Combat

Shadow sylphs avoid physical combat when possible and rely on their illusions to confuse and lead away travelers who have trespassed in their territory. When combat is necessary, they make good use of their *shadow walk* ability to keep out of melee range and snipe from the shadows with their longbows.



Spell-like abilities (Sp): 1/day – *blur*, 1/day – *minor image* (DC 13), 3/day – *lesser confusion* (DC 12); Caster level 4th. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Shadow walk (Su): As a move action, a shadow sylph may transport itself up to 30 ft. as if by means of a *dimension door* spell. This movement must begin and end in shadowy areas, and does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

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